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LWT

LUTHERAN WOMAN

JULY/AUGUST 2001

TODAY

*Sisters and
Brothers in
Faith*

PROCESSED

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For growth in faith and mission

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"Sisters and Brothers in

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Bicycles, Davis, Calif.

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"Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:35).

Greetings to you, good and faithful readers:

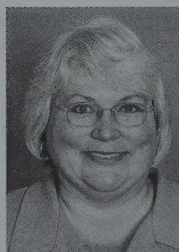
I welcome you as sisters and brothers in faith. You will find several articles in this issue of *Lutheran Woman Today* that explore the bonds of family that are created, strengthened, and sustained through our mutual faith. As you read about some of the women whose lives and dreams we celebrate here, those who mentor and those who blaze trails, those who seek peace and those who sustain themselves on hope, I hope you find strength and courage in their words.

As you have undoubtedly read or heard, *Lutheran Woman Today* will undergo a much-needed facelift. This redesign of the magazine has been in the works for a number of years, and we are very pleased to be able to bring to fruition the plans and dreams of those who have gone before us. You can read more detail about these changes on page 7.

Before you settle in and begin reading your favorite column this month, I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce the staff of *LWT*. On these pages you will find the names and faces to accompany the voices many of you have heard on the phone or received letters or email messages from. The staff is

composed of an exciting mix of new and returning members. We have a lot of great articles to share with you in the coming issues and some exciting changes as well. So take a minute or two to get to know us a little better. Then, if the Spirit so moves, drop us a line. We'd love to hear from you!

*Blessings in Christ,
Nancy Goldberger
Editor*



**BARBARA
RUCKOLDT**

As Associate Executive Director of Women of the ELCA, Barbara is Director of the Resource Development and

Management Group and serves as Executive Editor of *LWT*. A graduate of National Louis University, Barbara has extensive experience in publishing, advertising, communications, adult education, prevention, advocacy, volunteer management, community organizing, social service, organizational development, and parenting. Her breadth of experience is exceeded by her depth of interest in helping women discover, explore, and celebrate the many and varied gifts and talents they have received from God.



NANCY GOLDBERGER

New to the *LWT* staff, Nancy is very pleased to serve Women of the ELCA in the capacity of Editor. A graduate of

Concordia University in River Forest, Illinois, and of Loyola University in Chicago, she has 10 years of publishing experience as well as six years of experience in the field of education. Nancy enjoys not only the publishing aspect of her role with *LWT*, but also the way it allows her to actively blend God's word into daily life. She loves getting to know the people who read *LWT*. She credits her mother for planting and nourishing her love of words, her father for her sense of humor, and her family for allowing her to flourish in their love and care. In her spare time, Nancy enjoys participating in and attending sporting events.



DEB BOGAERT

Deb has been Managing Editor of *LWT* since September 2000, having joined the magazine as Associate Editor in September

1999. Deb is excited and energized by the challenges and opportunities of her still-evolving position, and enjoys the "traffic cop" and "piecing together the puzzle" aspects of her role. Working on this publication allows her to blend her love of both words and the Word. Deb has spent virtually all of her professional career in religious publishing, having earned degrees in religious studies, journalism, and theology from DePaul University, Northwestern University, and Catholic Theological Union, respectively. In her free time, she enjoys bicycling, singing soprano in a semi-professional chorus, and playing with her godchildren.

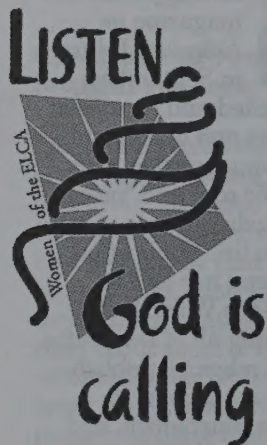


BETH MCBRIDE

Beth joined the *Lutheran Woman Today* staff as Editorial Assistant in November 2000. Through her position on staff, she has gained a deeper understanding of the editorial process and creative decision making involved in producing a magazine. Since joining the Women of the ELCA, she has had an opportunity to become familiar with some of *LWT*'s faithful readers. She also enjoys sharing knowledge about the organization. Prior to working for *LWT*, Beth garnered some of her other experience as an art director, graphic artist, and restaurant manager. She has an art degree from Arizona State University. When she is not on the job, Beth enjoys expressing herself through her interests in oil painting and creating mixed-media pieces. She loves travel and visiting art galleries and museums. On her most recent trip to Ireland, Beth rediscovered the beauty of the country's land and people.

Called to listen, called to live God's justice

by Linda Chinnia and Catherine I. H. Braasch



It's already past the midpoint in the 1999–2002 Triennium, with its challenging call to Live God's Justice, "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

Ever since we gathered for the Fourth Triennial Convention in St. Louis in July 1999, Women of the ELCA in 7,837 congregational units have been living God's justice in the ways women do so well:

- Gathering women of all ages for sisterhood and support of each other in their daily lives.
- Growing in faith through ministries of Bible study, prayer, worship, and recreation.
- Going forth to lead in service wherever God calls them to go.

As your churchwide president and executive director, we are privileged to see firsthand what faithful women are doing in the name of Jesus, in word and in deed, from border to border, coast to coast.

As we "Live God's Justice," we also listen, because God is calling. We're looking forward to the Fifth Triennial Gathering of Women of the ELCA, July 8–14, 2002, and the theme for 2002–2005, "Listen, God Is Calling." We are prepared to lead an organization-wide listening process. With help from volunteers and staff, we are asking sisters and brothers in Christ to reflect on Women of the ELCA ministries. We are gathering incredible input about the mission, how lives are changed by this mission, and what God calls us to be and do as Lutheran women in the 21st century.

As we listen, live, and move into the future that God is preparing for us (and preparing us for), we are convinced that there has never been a better time to be a part of Women of the ELCA. As you read this issue of *Lutheran Woman Today*, give thanks as we do for the hundreds of thousands of faithful women who, like you, choose Women of the ELCA as the place to Gather, Grow, and Go in Christian witness and service. ■

Linda Chinnia and Catherine I. H. Braasch are the president and executive director of Women of the ELCA.

Philadelphia: The city of sisterly love

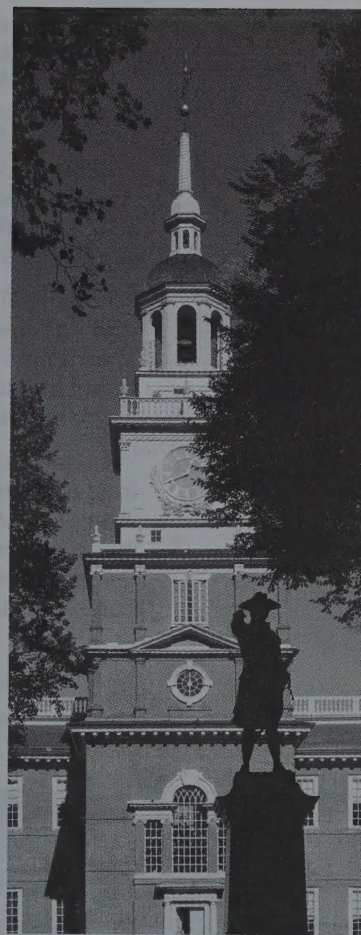
by Doris Krewson

This is the first in a series of related articles highlighting the Fifth Triennial Gathering of Women of the ELCA in Philadelphia, July 8–14, 2002. We hope the articles will provide that extra little nudge you or someone you know might need to join us in Philly. We hope you will begin to imagine how wonderful it will be to not only attend the gathering but also to experience the city. Enjoy!—Ed.

Have you ever entered a home for the first time and immediately felt a warm welcome? It has been said that feeling prevails upon arriving in Philadelphia. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul describes love in its various meanings: *agape*, *eros*, and *philia*. The very name of our city, Philadelphia, means “the city of brotherly love.” Well, guess what? The city does very well with sisterly love,” too!

As we plan to gather as Women of the ELCA to be nourished by the Holy Spirit, we also look forward to being nourished at some of the great restaurants you’ll find throughout the city center. Of course, you must taste some of Philly’s favorites: soft pretzels, cheese steaks, hoagies, and Tastykakes.

Philadelphia is a city filled with multicultural opportunities. It is rich in religious and national history. There are many historical sites in the city where significant and important events in our nation’s past took place. Here you’ll find Independence Hall, the Liberty Bell, and the Betsy Ross House. You’ll also find the Old Swedes Church, and in Germantown there’s the Lutheran Theological Seminary.



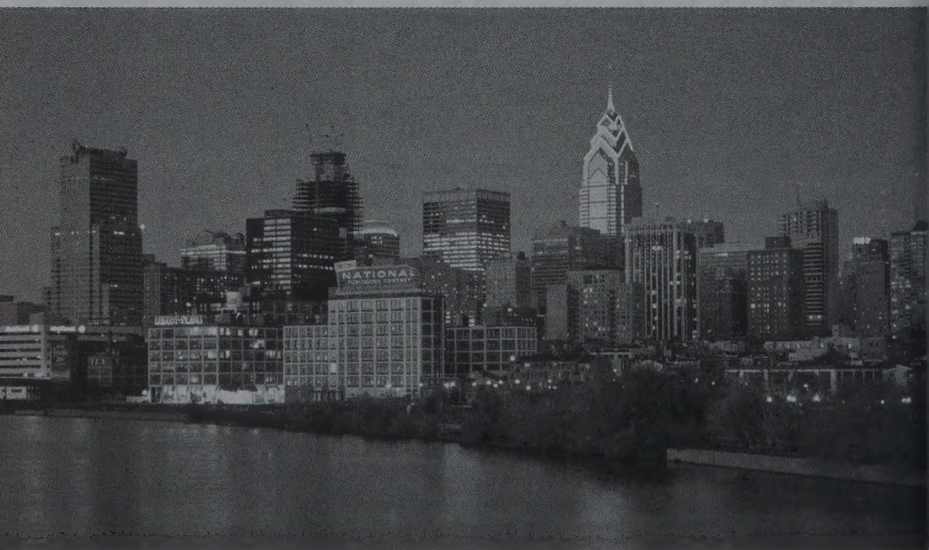
*Independence
Hall*

Other points of interest are within a short drive from the city. There is Augustus Trappe Lutheran Church, where Henry Melchior Muhlenberg established the first Lutheran congregation in the United States. You can take a drive out to nearby Lancaster County and visit an Amish community. And for those who have never seen the ocean, the Atlantic shore communities in southern New Jersey are simply delightful. You can even visit the site where *Rocky* was filmed on the steps of our famous and beautiful Art Museum.

Philadelphia's warm welcome was most evident to those who attended the ELCA Assembly in the summer of 1997. The Women of the ELCA in Southeastern Pennsylvania would like to share warm, welcoming hugs with all of you in the summer of 2002.

To quote our past president, Marjorie Aronson, in her invitation to the last Triennial Convention in St. Louis, "It is, after all, just a city. It is the people and the event that makes an experience memorable." Yes, it will be warm, probably very hot, but also "very cool" to have you here with us. So come and share in our "Sisterly Love." ■

Doris Krewson is president of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.



Dear Friends,

How wonderful it is that we are able to enter into this new and exciting time together! *Lutheran Woman Today*, after many months of discussion and much hard work, will have a whole new look you both deserve and have come to expect. This change—full size and full color—will begin with your very next issue, September 2001!

All the things you love about *LWT* will still be there: award-winning Bible studies, Marj Leegard's witty columns on faith in life, Reader Call, Bookmarks, and all the other regular columns, as well as seasonal devotions, theological reflections, and the kinds of feature articles that have made *LWT* your favorite magazine.

When *LWT* was introduced in 1988, printing at this size and in just two colors (the style you see in this issue) was more cost-effective, and it made sense for the fledgling magazine. Over time, though, the magazine outgrew its format, and the familiar digest size presented limitations. Fortunately, due to advances in technology that have brought down the cost of color printing, there will not be a need to resort to advertising to bring in additional revenue.

Another growing concern was the prohibitive cost of producing the Big Print edition. As some of you may know, the digest format prevents a good number of readers from enjoying the magazine because the type is too small. While we certainly saw producing the Big Print edition as valuable, it not only created more hours of labor but also accounted for greatly increased printing expenses. The staff at *LWT* has made every effort to bring all of its readers a single, full-size, full-color magazine with highly readable, good-size text that will be easy on everyone's eyes.

All of us hope that you are looking forward to *LWT*'s new look as much as we are. Ever committed to the mission of Women of the ELCA, we remain, with you,

Linda Chinnia, president, Women of the ELCA

Catherine I. H. Braasch, executive director, Women of the ELCA

Barbara Ruckoldt, executive editor, *LWT*

Nancy Goldberger, editor, *LWT*

Deb Bogaert, managing editor, *LWT*

Sibling rivalry



I think we could be in a real predicament. When we're children, we want our parents all to ourselves. We also want all the toys and all the treats, and the window seat in the car, too (though that was never my worry, since we didn't have a car). When we are young children, sharing anything with a brother or sister is not in our nature.

Our nature does not give us rest when we are grown-ups, either. We carefully measure not only our par-

ents' response to us compared to the response our siblings get, but also every breath of their acknowledgment of our own children compared to what's directed toward the encroaching cousins.

And yet in this sea of selfishness and jealousy, we need companions. Brothers and sisters become loved and respected. If we do not have brothers or sisters, we find them in our friends. "She's like a sister to me," we say, or "I feel as if he is my brother."

When my granddaughter Megan was small, we spent hours in her playhouse. At age 3 she was the managerial type. She ran a pretend café and gave me the task of supplying all the imaginary children whom she would serve. Megan played the part of mother/big sister/waitress. She knew all the children and all of their food likes and dislikes. She knew which ones were apt to spill. We spent hours getting imaginary children into high-chairs. She insisted that they drink juice and not eat their french fries too fast. No sooner had I paid the bill and hustled all the pretend children out than I was summoned back again.

In that blink of an eye it was instantly the next day, and Megan had to have a playhouse filled with children again, imaginary customers for imaginary food.

When we are grown, imagination doesn't fill our needs so easily. We want our own sisters and brothers. We want our friends who have become like sisters and brothers to us. We cherish our family in faith. In an ideal world we would no longer jostle for the window seat. We would not measure our lives or our beliefs against those of our siblings in faith. We live in God's created world as at once both forgiven and as sinners.

It would be nice to think of my sisters of another persuasion and occasionally fire off a greeting card or an email message. I can get along that way, but just barely. My deepest needs are satisfied only with a closer walk, with the understanding nod, with the shared tear and the double-shared laughter. I need the shouted "Yes!" at new understandings of old truths. I need others' strengths, just as I must be willing to share others' weaknesses.

There is no backseat for me where both windows are mine. There is no heavenly Father who is mine alone and who cares for me alone. I long to be in Megan's playhouse filled with all of God's children. And I don't have to imagine them. They are all around.

We are called across age differences and across geographical distances, across parish lines and denominational boundaries, across shapes and colors to be sisters in faith. You are indeed sisters and brothers to me, and I thank God for that blessed gift. The details of living together in faith have yet to be worked out. We are all works in progress. And I seem to remember that when we were sent upstairs to think over our misdeeds, it was always better to be together than separated!

What I at first wanted to call a predicament I think can now be called an opportunity. Come into the playhouse and bring your children with you! ■

*To the readers of
"Give Us This Day":*

*Won't it be great
to go on to the next
stage of development
in this always
changing world?
I am excited.*

*Watch for the new
September look,
for I'll be there, too.*

—Marj Leegard

LWT columnist Marj Leegard and her husband, Jerome, live in Detroit Lakes, Minn.

Interfaith families: Dialogue or duelogue?

by Linda Johnson Seyenkulo

"Pastor, I'm getting married in a civil ceremony next month to a wonderful woman. She's Muslim. We want you to do a blessing of our marriage at church. Can you do that? I'd like that and so would my parents. She's really open to it. We haven't told her parents about this yet."

An interfaith marriage used to be a Lutheran and someone from another Christian denomination, like Roman Catholic. Things have changed. Our mobile society, globalization, ease of travel, and the diversity of neighborhoods mean that we meet people from different backgrounds much more easily and with much greater frequency than people did in the past. Today, common religious values are often the exception in families instead of the norm. The concept of "interfaith families" has broadened to include other religions.

In many Lutheran churches you will find at least one family that is experiencing or has experienced the entry into the family of someone from another faith. It leads to questions, concerns about children, and an uncertainty about what role faith plays in the family. Also, when people deal with each other with honesty and sensitivity, it can be a wonderful way to learn from each other, to learn more about your own faith, and to grow in knowledge of God.



When family members have a chance to be close to another religion or expression of the Christian faith, many questions can arise. Often the questions are about which faith is right, in what faith the children will be raised, or who is going to convert whom. The most important question at the onset, however, seems to be, "How do we talk about faith in our family?"

A true story someone shared with me: *"We were getting together to celebrate Passover. I had gone to church with Randy for Easter. He was coming over to celebrate Passover. His contribution for the dinner was hard-boiled eggs. The doorbell rang. There stood Randy with a big smile on his face and the basket of eggs. When we opened the basket there were the eggs, with 'He is Risen!' written on each one. We laughed until we cried; then we prayed and ate together."*

It is often a challenge for families to use grace and humor in significant discussions. The closeness of relationships sometimes makes it difficult. When you add religious differences to the mix, communication becomes particularly difficult. The great commission for Christians ("Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," Matthew 28:19–20) is heard as witnessing and converting others. Some of the world's major religions have that same focus. Others accept all faiths as valid and incorporate them into theirs (Buddhism, for one). For some families, particularly extended families, the intensity of wanting to convert someone makes getting together extremely difficult, if not impossible. Even in the most accepting families, people may feel nervous and worried that they will step on someone's toes by saying or doing the wrong thing.

Because of the evangelistic part of many religions, family members on both sides of a religious debate may try to convert each other. Sometimes the religious difference becomes the focus of the relationship. People start taking part in "duelogue" rather than "dialogue" with each other. Communication breaks down, and family relationships get very complicated.

It is important to see that when it comes to communication there's a significant difference between "dialogue" and "duelogue." Often when talking about faith, people move from the informational and heart-felt sharing of what their faith means to them (dialogue) to a competitive,



“my faith is best” kind of interaction (duelogue).

In order for good dialogue to happen, people have to be knowledgeable about their own faith. They have to have studied their scriptures. They take turns sharing what they believe. They take turns really listening.

The listening part of a dialogue is active listening. This can be the most challenging way of being in interfaith relationships. It can also be the most rewarding. Genuine dialogue happens when people listen intentionally to learn rather than thinking about what it is they are going to say when the person is done talking. It also means that both parties may be somewhat changed by what they learn from each other.

“Duelogue,” on the other hand, is a lecture and exercise of trying to make the other person see the light. The focus is on proving a point and showing how the other person is wrong. In this type of a scenario, often neither person is listening to

the other. The discussion about faith is so focused at being one up on the other person that no real communication takes place. Many of us have been raised to judge all other religions as inferior faiths. This comes out strongly when interfaith family members talk to each other about faith but are unwilling to listen to each other.

In families where dialogue takes place, people learn about both their own faith and the faith of others. They see different ways of knowing God. It is unique and interesting to think about our faith as a way of knowing God. For Lutherans, that way comes through Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. Learning about other faiths does not take anything away from this—it strengthens and broadens it.

"My son's in love," my friend said. "He's in love, and I'm upset. The woman is an evangelical Christian, one of those 'born again' types. He's thinking about joining her church. He says it 'speaks to him,' whatever that means."

Sometimes the faith differences in families are between Christians. This usually has to do with how faith is expressed (spiritual gifts, etc.) or certain key theologies, such as when a person is born again or what it means to be a "real Christian." These differences can be as difficult as when the family member is from a non-Christian tradition. The rules for addressing the faith issues are the same.

The following are some tips for making interfaith family life interesting, rewarding, life-giving, and faith-fulfilling. These tips are also a loving way of working together on family religious issues.

- 1. Know your own faith by practicing discipleship.** Have a discipline that includes reading the Bible, praying often, and worshiping regularly.
- 2. Actively listen to the other person.** Don't think about what you will say or how you will refute what they are saying about God.
- 3. Listen to learn.** You may learn something from the other person and increase your own understanding of God and of your own faith.
- 4. Teach children about faith.** In an interfaith family, bring them up in one of the faiths from a very young age. Talk about the difference in faiths.
- 5. Use grace and humor in family discussions about faith.** It takes practice, so don't give up on it quickly.
- 6. For extended families,** let the people in the interfaith relationship work out their own situation. Offer advice when asked. Be supportive and honest.
- 7. Practice patience.** When the situation seems impossible, God has ways of working things out when you cannot think of anything.

It's a whole new world of living with, working with, and loving people from other faiths. May God bless the learning and the growing that takes place in interfaith families. ■

Linda Johnson Seyenkulo is a pastor at Zion Lutheran Church on Chicago's south side.

Four women of faith who led the way for me

by Margaret Wold



Sister Clara was less than 5 feet tall and probably about 100 pounds when she spoke at a Luther League meeting back when I was in high school. Her talk was a soft-spoken account of her life as a nurse and Bible teacher in Madagascar, an island off the coast of Africa. She told us about a one-time queen of Madagascar who hated missionaries so much that she had many of them thrown off a cliff into the sea to die. I looked at Sister Clara and wondered how this tiny deaconess could go, alone and seemingly unafraid, into a strange nation so fraught with danger.

Growing up in Chicago during the gangster era, I was fearful of everything—lightning and thunder, strange dogs, strange people, strange noises, and the dark. Almost as though she had read my mind, Sister Clara said that she

had discovered Paul's words to the church at Corinth to be true for her also: "I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me" (2 Corinthians 12:9b). "Courage is not what it takes to follow God's dream for us," she told us, "but a firm faith in the power of God to confront and overcome evil."



Then there was Carrie Anderson, dean of women and teacher of Bible at Luther College. I marveled that a woman was teaching Bible, since I had been told that women were

not permitted to teach in the colleges of the church. Nevertheless, I declared majors in Greek and Bible, convinced that God had called me for that same purpose, to teach. When I mentioned this to Carrie, she said, "Margaret, if you feel that's what the Lord wants you to do, then you go ahead and prepare. Be patient and wait, and God will open the way." She was there teaching Bible, she told me, because most of the men had joined the armed forces for World War II. So I trusted her words of patience, and I waited.

Ten years later, after my husband and I obtained our graduate degrees, he was invited to join the faculty at Luther Seminary. I was asked to teach a Bible course one summer for the same reason Carrie had taught there—all the men were away from the campus for one reason or another.

Many years later, when my husband retired from parish ministry, I was invited to join the faculty at California Lutheran University as an associate professor of religion. The words of patience were realized: "Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act" (Psalm 37:4–5).

*"Be patient
and wait, and
God will open
the way."*

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

I met Cynthia, a senior at the University of Minnesota, at a "consciousness-raising" group in the early 1970s. I had just started a new job as director of our national church women's auxiliary following my husband's paralyzing ocean accident. Since I had been active in securing the right for women to be ordained, I was delighted to discover that Cynthia was planning to enter a seminary and prepare for ordination as a Lutheran pastor.

I was at once struck by Cynthia's intelligence and ability to state her views with conviction and honesty. Having been brought up with the admonition that women should always "be nice," I found Cynthia's forthrightness refreshing, yet somewhat alarming. My admiration grew, however, as I came to know her as a woman who justified my belief that women could be effective pastors.

One of our sons entered the same seminary that fall, and guess what? Cynthia is now my daughter-in-law, as well as everything we had envisioned for women in

ministry. Our relationship as mother and daughter-in-law hasn't always been comfortable, but I must confess that I've learned much about the openness and honesty that Jesus manifested and that he seems to expect from his followers.



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brought up with
the admonition
that women should
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Finally, there was Alma, who illustrated to me the prophetic role women are called to play in their congregations. Older women are often the backbone of their congregations and have a strong sense of ownership of the place and its mission.

I had been sent by the bishop, as a member of his staff, to moderate a meeting of her congregation at which a decision would be made on whether or not to merge with a historic, formerly thriving congregation. Alma had been a member of her church ever since it had split from the same congregation with which they were now being asked to merge!

Both buildings were beautiful, but Alma's had many stairs, and it was now difficult for the older people to come to worship. The meeting was almost over when Alma spoke.

"You all know that I was a baby when we came here 76 years ago. The altar cross and candles were given in memory of my parents. I love this church. But if we say no to this merger, both congregations will die. We must say yes to the invitation to rejoin our mother church." The vote was unanimous.

My thanks, then, to Clara, Carrie, Cynthia, and Alma, transmitters of the faith in my life! ■

Margaret Wold has served the church as a founder of parish-sponsored pre-school, as executive director of the women's auxiliary of the American Lutheran Church, and as the director for ministry in changing communities for the ALC. She has received three honorary doctorates and written nine books.

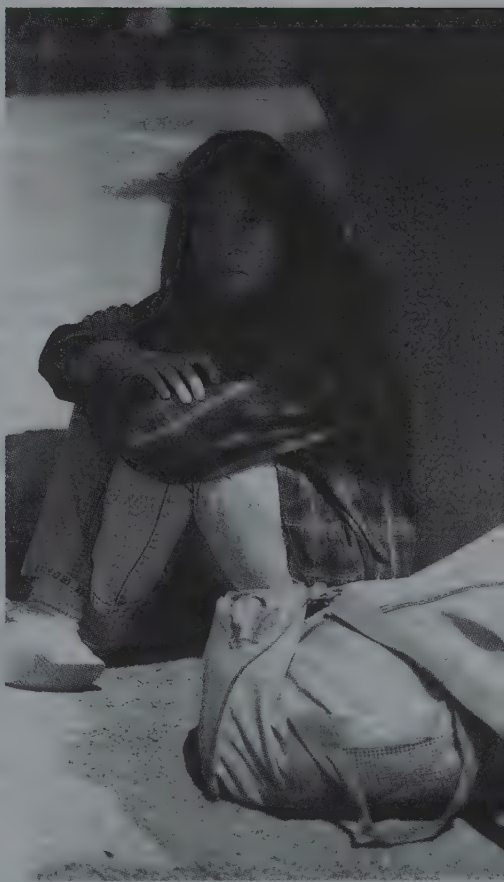
It takes a village

by Tina Dabney

When you hear the well-known African proverb "It takes a village to raise a child," it may evoke images of a small child of color, a child considered neglected because the traditional family unit is not in place. The inhabitants of the "village" would all live in close proximity to each other. They are relatives and friends, but the village may also include other people who readily assume the roles of mother, father, or counselor to this child.

One might also conjure up an anecdotal version of the life of this child, where the mother is a single parent, perhaps a teenager too young for this arduous task or even a drug addict. The father, perhaps unemployed or a convict, has abandoned this child and his mother. You picture this raggedy-clothed child as destined for trouble, with poor academic performance and a disruptive personality. You believe that if this child continues down this path, he or she surely will get involved with crime or drugs as well.

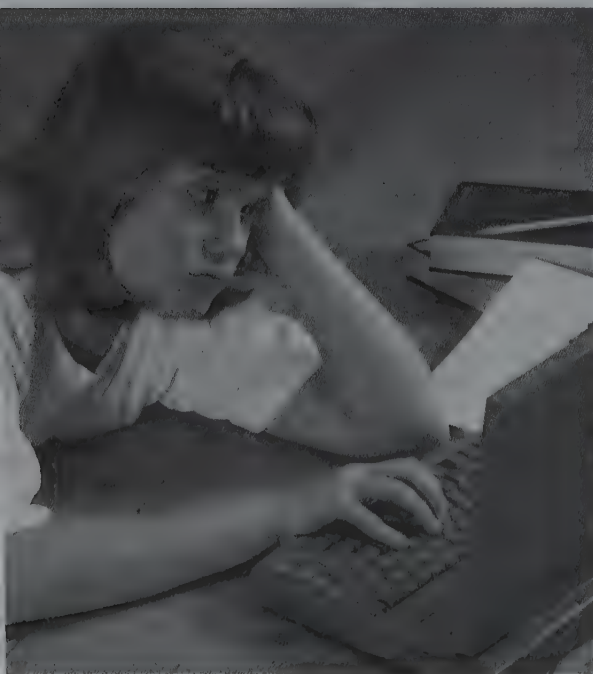
You may imagine that the villagers charged with "raising the child" undertake the most crucial aspects of this responsibility. They are the ones who will ensure that this child is fed, clothed, and made to feel worthy. Someone in the village makes sure this child is taken to church and taught Christian values, and there is also a host of well-meaning friends and relatives who mentor and serve as role models for this child as he or she moves



from childhood to adolescence to adulthood. When all is said and done, a well-adjusted, successful, and productive adult emerges from the fruits of this labor of love by the villagers.

While this is an oversimplified picture, it gives a good description of how a village can participate in the upbringing of an at-risk child. The application of the proverb provides an alternative method for child-rearing, especially for at-risk children. Its success is substantiated by the testimonies of adults who survived troubled childhoods. These adults often attribute their achievements to people who adopted them in their hearts and provided assistance throughout their childhood.

Given this, there is little wonder why this proverb is on the lips of child-welfare advocates and ministers across the nation. It is used in their promotional materials, speeches, and presentations in an effort to recapture what it means to be community to children who are at risk. People from many different walks of life seek the wisdom of those who have maintained this environment of participation. They want help raise and protect children who might be on the path to self-destruction.



But I'd like to give some additional interpretation to the proverb "It takes a village to raise a child." One version of this child might be found in a two-parent family setting. The parents, caught up in their quest to provide material comforts, are too busy to notice that their child needs attention. The TV and Internet raise the child. Perhaps due to sheer boredom the child participates in unhealthy or unsavory activities.

If we are to reconstruct the village, its inhabitants must consider themselves stakeholders in the future of the children. Keep in mind that this should

address the manner in which all children in the village are treated by the villagers, without regard to their parental situation. The village celebrates all of God's children.

Since it is important that the children overcome barriers that might stunt their growth as a honored members of the village, the villagers never give up hope or lower their expectations for the children. In this village, there are children who have birth-given names but who also answer to terms of endearment such as "son" or "child" because the environment cultivates a sense of belonging. These children know that the village is vested in them. There is an unspoken authorization that a child can be lovingly chastised by any adult in the village. Each child understands that strong words represent concern and care. Bonds are strengthened because the child is also truly heard.



The village understands that a child's character is built upon the role models that they encounter. In the village, everyone has value and worth. The elders are the most respected members in the village, and children are instilled with this appreciation.

The village recognizes and encourages individuality. The wisdom of each of the villagers is acknowledged. There is an appreciation for those who have survived the threats of poverty, hunger, homelessness, and illiteracy. Everyone wants to take part in making a positive mark on the children. They want their children to know life's promises. In Proverbs 27:23 we find the challenge, "Know well the condition of your flocks, and give careful attention to your herds; for riches do not last forever, nor a crown for all generations."

A second version of the "child" is now emerging in society. It is the child-like adult who no longer responds maturely to making critical decisions regarding right and wrong. These are adults who have learned negative characteristics and behaviors and have become abusive to themselves and in their relationships with others.



The message for the villagers, however, doesn't change. It is still the primary responsibility of the village to nurture the relationships among all its children. Therefore, there is a new challenge for those who understand that "it takes a village to raise a child." This proverb must be revised to include child-like adults who require help to get their lives back into the right perspective in order for the village to continue raising its young and so that positive role models exist.

The child-like adult will need the same type of relationships that include guidance, compassion, and discipline. The child-like adult will also need to relearn values that have been forgotten. They must learn anew how to deal with pain and disappointments. They will need to resume their rightful roles so that their actions can be imitated by the next generation of children. Proverbs 23:18 tells us, "Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off."

The way the village makes children its primary concern is a way of life—not just a gesture of goodwill. It becomes the responsibility of its inhabitants, who understand this concept to re-create the village model in all areas. Models of these villages can be found in activities such as the "Simba Circle" as well as in prayer and Bible study groups. It will take a village to raise our children and our lost, child-like adults. It will take love. It is nothing more than what our church should be—a village raising all of God's children to realize their spiritual and social potential.

If you would like more information regarding this topic, contact the Division for Church in Society at 800-638-3522, ext. 2710. ■

Tina Dabney is the project director for Women and Children in Poverty for the ELCA.

Subversive princesses of the Reformation

by Twila Schock

"My grandmother snuck me to another village at 3 in the morning and had me baptized," said my Slovak religion student, Lenka. "She knew that if she did it in any other way, my parents could lose their jobs or I would never have the opportunity to study in a university or travel."

After nearly seven years of missionary service in three former Communist nations, the stories of the Lenka's and the subversive activities of their grandmothers no longer shock me. I marvel still, though, at the gross misjudgment made by the Communist governments in underestimating the power of these "subversive grandmothers" to preserve, form, and reform the church and society.

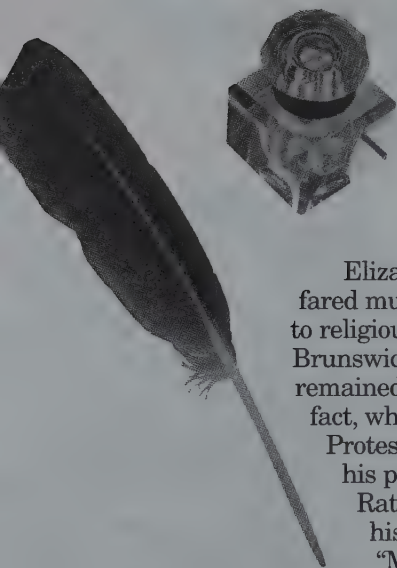
Protestantism might have taken on a notably different flavor were it not for another category of sometimes subversive women—German princesses, queens, and regents. Through political appointments, letter-writing, and religious home-schooling, these "subversive princesses" furthered the cause of the 16th-century reforms begun by Martin Luther, John Knox, and Philip Melanchthon.

ELIZABETH OF BRANDENBURG

Pastor Erika Pauline Fechner, director of the commission for Women of the German Church Province of Saxony, tells us that "bodies of materials and letters which document this phenomenon are waiting to be researched" (from interviews by Renate Skirl, ELCA Wittenberg Center). Princess Elizabeth of Brandenburg, the wife of Elector Joachim I of Brandenburg, is one such example, says Pastor Fechner. After embracing the teachings of the Reformers, Elizabeth was threatened with death and banned by her Roman Catholic husband.



*University
Library in
Heidelberg,
Germany*



However, Elizabeth was not left stranded. She was fortunate to be a relative of Martin Luther's protector, Elector Frederick the Wise. So she took up residence with the Luther family in Wittenberg, where Katharina von Bora cared for her. Despite her hardship, Elizabeth's subversive religious activities were not wasted in the family tree.

Elizabeth's daughter, also named Elizabeth, fared much better than her mother when it came to religious affairs. Her husband, Eric, the Duke of Brunswick-Calenburg (whom she married in 1524), remained Catholic while she became Protestant. In fact, while young Elizabeth was privately courting Protestantism in 1533, Eric actually strengthened his political allies against the Protestants.

Rather than repeating the doleful history of his mother-in-law, Eric spoke with tolerance: "My wife does not interfere with and molest us in our faith, and therefore we will leave her undisturbed and unmolested in hers" (from J. H. Anderson's *Ladies of the Reformation: Short Biographies of Distinguished Ladies of the 16th Century*).

WITTENBERG CENTER

The ELCA Wittenberg Center can help you learn more about the history of your faith. The center promotes a deeper understanding of the theology, heritage, and spirit of the Reformation, empowering participants to strengthen their faith and encouraging the church to act as a contemporary, living witness to the gospel.

You can discover how your heritage speaks to your faith today by walking in the footsteps of the Reformers through study seminars led by noted church historians. These seminars combine reading Martin Luther's works with lectures and worship experiences in historic sites.

Other opportunities include participation in inter-term or semester programs for college students; attendance at Christian youth events; enrolling in theme-specific consultations in areas such as homiletics, women's issues, or the arts; or gathering together for cross-cultural and ethnic-specific reflection on the Lutheran tradition.

After her husband's death, Elizabeth of Brunswick-Calenburg became regent and her territory, the region of Brunswick, became Protestant. Elizabeth is especially remembered for reopening dissolved Catholic cloisters as Protestant cloisters in Calenburg, Gittingen, and Laneburg. Cloisters were more than spiritual communities in 16th-century Germany. They also were educational institutions for women at a time when women's education was only for the elite.

ARGULA VON GRUMBACH

By far one of the more colorful noblewomen Reformers in the Protestant family tree is Argula von Grumbach. While the former "subversive princesses" followed paths of action that had been prepared by the male reformers, Argula charted her own course. Her boldness earned her much criticism.

When the University of Ingolstadt accused one of its young professors of having Lutheran inclinations, Argula protested in a letter to the faculty. Knowing that she was stepping outside the bounds of acceptable female behavior, she justified her actions: "I am not unacquainted with the word of Paul that women should be silent in Church but,

Some people come to the Wittenberg Center specifically to grow spiritually. Renew and revitalize your faith through a spiritual pilgrimage into the Lutheran confessional heritage. You may also gain a deeper understanding of your Christian and Lutheran identity through opportunities for guided study and reflection.

Still others come to the Wittenberg Center to do research, as there are excellent resources for sabbatical research in Wittenberg and other Luther sites. Wittenberg Center programs are designed for members of the ELCA, pastors, and rostered lay leaders, college students, seminary students, members or leaders of campus ministry teams, youth scholars, students in continuing education, and you.

For more information, visit this website at www.elca.org/ewbc, contact the directors at ELCAWittenbergCenter@t-online.de, or contact Marlene Dewulf at 1-800-NET-ELCA.

when no man will or can speak, I am driven by the word of the Lord when he said, 'He who confesses me on earth, him will I confess, and he who denies me, him will I deny,' and

I take comfort in the words of the prophet Isaiah, 'I will send you children to be your princes and women to be your rulers'" (from Roland Bainton's *Women of the Reformation in Germany and Italy*).

She also wrote to the Duke of Bavaria. Neither the duke nor the university replied to her. Rather, they urged her husband to silence her and expressed their disapproval by not hiring him for an official post.

Argula, however, was not to be silenced. She instead wrote to the Ingolstadt city council, to Elector Frederick the Wise, and to Martin Luther himself, requesting a hearing at the Diet at Nuremberg. Historian Merry Wiesner writes, "Her letters were published without her knowledge, provoking a student at Ingolstadt to write an anonymous satirical poem telling her to stick to spinning and hinting that she was interested in the young teacher" she was defending (from Merry E. Wiesner's *Nuns, Wives, and Mothers: Women and the Reformation in Germany in Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe: Private and Public Worlds*).

Argula brought an end to her public career when she responded to the student with a poem she had written. Wiesner reports that "she called the student a coward for writing anonymously ... giving numerous biblical examples of women called on to give witness." While Argula retreated from the public eye, she continued to work "behind the scenes," writing to Luther and other reformers and visiting Luther in 1530.

Whether these faithful women were "subversive grandmothers" or "subversive princesses," they understood the power of the gospel. They used whatever station in life they were in to be witnesses to its transforming power. What they could never have known is how their silent and sometimes subversive witness would impact the world. ■

Twila Schock and her husband, Bill Swanson, serve as a directors of the ELCA Wittenberg Center in Germany.

Twila also has served as pastor and teacher at a number of churches far and wide.

Our grandmothers' ways

My husband and I moved into our first house four years ago. I was pregnant and ready to settle in: prepare the baby's room, get to know my neighbors, and start making it "home." We live on a block with lots of houses in a very urban setting. I was sure the doorbell would soon ring with our first neighbor saying, "Hello! Welcome to the block!" But the doorbell was silent.

About five weeks after we had moved in, we still hadn't met our neighbors. My husband and I both worked, and our evenings were spent unpacking, painting, and arranging our house. It was about this time that I was starting to pout. Was it my job to go door to door? I was getting bigger and my ankles were swollen, and I'm not a very outgoing person to begin with.

Finally, one evening I returned home from work to find a paper bag on our front porch. My heart swelled—I knew we were being welcomed. I carried the bag into the house and opened it to find an apple pie—exactly what a pregnant woman dreams of finding on her front porch after a long commute home! Then I found the note with it. I looked at the envelope, and the name on it *wasn't* Von Oehsen. Someone had left the pie at our door by mistake.

I just wasn't up to calling the couple who'd signed the note to tell them they must have the wrong house—I made my husband do it. He did, and found that the couple had thought we were members of their church who had just moved in down the block. They came and picked



Mothering Seasons continued

up their pie and took it to the correct house. I sat down and cried. Hospitality, where have you gone?

I am often brought back to my grandmother's farm kitchen, where it seemed that pie was always baking and the coffeepot was always on. No matter if someone dropped by unannounced—new friend or old, there was always plenty to go around. Then I think of my mother, who can put together an amazing lasagna in 15 minutes flat. I can't count the number of pans I've delivered for all sorts of reasons.

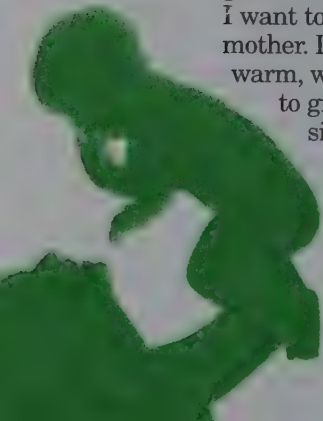
The art of hospitality seems to be getting lost. While there are actually many among us (Lutheran women in particular) who are very good at it, society as a whole seems less gracious. My favorite story as a child was the feeding of the 5,000 from Matthew 14:13–21. I imagined a great picnic with people eating and eating, with baskets being passed around until no one could take even one more bite. The story is usually told to illustrate one of Jesus' great miracles, but it is also about Jesus declaring the importance of nourishing those who had gathered in a "deserted place." Jesus showed us how to be hospitable. With his simple words and his blessing of the food, we understand that God will always provide enough for us to share with others.

Cindy Von Oehsen lives in Oak Park, Ill., with her husband and two children.

My own story has a very good ending. My next-door neighbor happens to be as shy as I am. When my baby was born, she showed up to welcome Sten. She has blessed my life in countless ways since with her help, her company, and her amazing cooking.

Even so, I'm on a bit of a campaign. I want my generation and the next to understand the importance of welcoming, of generosity, of opening our hands and our baskets to others. I want to remember the ways of my grandmothers and my mother. I want to set up my household and my church to be warm, welcoming, and gracious spaces. I want my children to grow up delivering goodies to new neighbors and sitting at the table sharing coffee with guests.

This summer, let's remember that great biblical picnic and appreciate the significance of five loaves and two fishes—the miracle of Jesus' hospitality. ■



When serious illness strikes

by Dolores Yancey

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope" (Jeremiah 29:11). These were the words chosen to give comfort and direction to the committee of family and friends that worked with persistent hope and faith to raise funds to make it possible for my 41-year-old daughter to receive a lung transplant in time to save her life. Alicia had been diagnosed several months earlier with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, a condition that would soon turn fatal if she was unable to receive a lung transplant.

It was December 23 and Alicia—despite her illness and being on oxygen—had made all the usual preparations for the entire family to gather at her home the next evening. We would prepare for Christmas morning and pray together in celebration of our many blessings as a family. It had become our custom to spend Christmas with Alicia and her family. This was where the true meaning of Christmas came alive for all of us.

In the middle of that day, I received a call to come to the emergency room. Upon arriving, I discovered Alicia was being hospitalized for a severe respiratory illness and, much against her will, was scheduled to be placed on a respirator. Alicia, believing that being placed on a respirator was final and irreversible, begged me not to allow this. She talked about the army of prayer warriors that were praying to God on her behalf and reminded me that I had taught her that our God is a faithful God.



Alicia and her family: Nicole, husband Keven, Kevie, and Jeremy.

She insisted that God—and not a machine—would help her to breathe. Referring to her fund-raising committee's chosen Bible verse, she insisted that God's plan for her was to give her a "future with hope." She also feared that being placed on a respirator would lessen her chances for a transplant, since it is rare for someone on life-support to be considered.

I did not know how to respond. On the one hand, there was this deep and abiding faith that Alicia and her husband had shared with their children through unbelievably difficult times. Regardless of the hardships or circumstances of life, they had remained strong and walked in faith, believing that God would not bring them this far to leave them. They endured loss of job, home, health insurance, and self-esteem. But they shared a love of God and of one another, and the birth of an unexpected baby boy whom they believed was somehow sent to them as a sign from God that everything would be alright. Jeremy is still affectionately called "the miracle on 79th Street." Jeremy's birth was the first in a series of miracles that I now know would not have happened if God did not have very special plans to use Alicia and her illness as instruments of his holy will.

In the midst of my pain and sorrow, I did not see the miracles, nor could I begin to discern God's will for us. I so wanted to share Alicia's optimism and reaffirm the faith that I had first nurtured in her as a child. But things were not looking good, and I was afraid. I wanted my child to live. Finally, we agreed with her doctors that without life-support she could not survive. I will never forget the look of fear and plea for help on her face as she struggled and finally succumbed to the inevitable on this Christmas Eve.

*I was able
to tell my child
I believed God
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Our Christian faith and assurance of God's love leads us to rely on the words in Jeremiah 29:11 regarding God's plan for each of us. However, as a parent, it becomes difficult to keep the faith and accept God's plan when your child looks up at you from her life-support ventilator and writes the words, "Will I still get my lung or am I going to die tonight?"

As part of their faith training, I had taught each of my children to pray and to end each prayer with "not my will, but thine be done, O Lord." Before I could answer Alicia, I suggested we pray. I read Psalm 46 and then asked her to hear the words of the Lord to "Be still, and know that I am God!" (verse 10). Having done this and remembering Jesus' words of encouragement to Jairus concerning his daughter, "do not fear, only believe," I was able to tell my child I believed God would be with us through the night, and indeed he was.

Alicia spent that Christmas and the next six weeks in intensive care, under the watchful eye and loving care of her parents, husband, children, and siblings. We literally took up residence in the ICU waiting room. We drew strength and comfort from the bonds of love and joy with one another that had always held us so close and now were preventing us from falling apart. We prayed together, we cried together, and at times, we despaired together, but always we remembered Alicia's words to us early in her struggle. She would say, "We are too blessed to be depressed." Somehow, her wisdom, inner peace, and patience in suffering always brought us back to hope.

We also knew we were not alone. We felt God's presence in that waiting room. We were surrounded and supported by many. Over those weeks, there developed a huge network of people who supported us prayerfully, financially, and in other very real and substantive ways. Not the least of the miracles that occurred for us as a family was our renewed faith in the goodness of God's people and the overwhelming generosity that flowed, often from perfect strangers. There was the woman who, like us, kept vigil in the waiting room through long days of uncertainty. As Alicia was being transferred to an ICU in Chicago, this woman pressed a \$100 bill into my hand and said, "This is for your daughter's transplant." In the midst of her sorrow, she had heard our concerns about funding and wanted to help.

There was the woman who owned an Italian restaurant who had read about Alicia in the local paper and sent food enough for the entire family to the hospital, not once, but several times. There were all the people from Alicia's new church family. Father Tom Ryan and the people of St. Thomas, strangers to Alicia until a few months earlier, had adopted her and faithfully prayed, visited, and showed their concern. One who became a dear friend



*Alicia on her
40th birthday.*

wrote, "Alicia, you are the angel that has touched my life and it will never be the same after seeing you struggle for the life we so take for granted." There was my home congregation that sponsored "Pennies for Alicia" and collected over \$800 toward matching Aid Association for Lutherans funds for the surgery. There were the hundreds of others who contributed thousands of dollars to help Alicia.

God's plans are not our plans. In spite of our faith and because of our humanity, it is sometimes very hard to accept the cruel irony of a situation and still profess to believe in God's plan for our good. Remember, God allowed his only beloved Son to suffer and die for us. Yet Jesus, God and man, cried from the cross, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). When I felt my heart could stand no more, I thought of Mary and how she had been forced to watch her son suffer and die so that we might live.

I like to believe that Mary did not understand any better than I did but she accepted God's will, and so must I.

Alicia had been moved up on the transplant list and was eligible for the first available lung. In the week before she died, she developed an infection that the doctors could neither identify nor control. Alicia had fought so valiantly and never gave up hope. So when a lung became available on January 25 (her 42nd birthday), Alicia was too sick to be transplanted. Although she was comatose, I sang her song, "Daddy's Little Girl." We celebrated her birthday and her life, and we prayed she was not in pain. Alicia was born into eternal life the following morning with those who loved her best at her bedside. Only God could have loved her more. ■

Dolores Yancey is a commissioned deacon and freelance spiritual writer. She is director for worship at St. John San Juan Lutheran Church in Austin, Texas. She served for eight years on the staff of Women of the ELCA.

The congregation that raised the funds for a matching grant from AAL was Christ the Mediator Lutheran Church, 3001 S. Calumet Ave., Chicago, IL 60616.

Coming Up in Lutheran Woman Today

September
2001

PRAYER AND SPIRITUALITY

This issue begins an exploration of prayer and how we can gain greater appreciation for the variety of ways we pray and relate to God. We will also look into the growing phenomenon of people who call themselves spiritual but not religious.

Bible Study

Teach Us to Pray, session 1: Calling Out to God

Study Text: Luke 18:1–8

Reader Call

Do you find prayer difficult? Tell us about it.

October
2001

THE WAYS WE WORSHIP

How do YOU worship God? Many of us have come to expect certain styles and traditions on Sunday mornings. We'll take a look at some new (and some not so new) trends in worship.

Bible Study

Teach Us to Pray, session 2: Praying for the Word

Study Text: Isaiah 55:8–12

Reader Call

Weddings, baptisms, and funerals can include powerful worship experiences. Besides these events, share one of your most meaningful worship experiences.

November
2001

FAITH INTO ACTION

"Actions speak louder than words" is a familiar phrase. This month we explore the ways our faith can translate into action and what can transpire when this happens.

Bible Study

Teach Us to Pray, session 3: Holding It Fast

Study Text: Matthew 15:21–28

Reader Call

Deadline: July 10, 2001

Gifts that come in nice "packages" are easy to identify. More difficult is recognizing gifts that come out of challenging situations. Share how you gleaned a gift out of such an experience.



December
2001

CELEBRATING TRADITIONS, CULTIVATING SIMPLICITY

In a season filled with familiar things, we have much to celebrate as we prepare for our Savior's birth. How can we enjoy this feast of food, sight, and sound while still nurturing our souls in simplicity?

Bible Study

Teach Us to Pray, session 4: Praying Against the Powers

Study text: Genesis 2:4-24, 3:1-7; Matthew 4:1-11

Reader Call Deadline: August 10, 2001

What are the temptations you struggle with most?

January/
February
2002

FORGIVENESS, RECONCILIATION, AND RENEWAL

A new year seems to bring fresh opportunities for forgiveness and reconciliation. Rejoice with us as we celebrate the new-found freedom and pursue spiritual renewal.

Bible Study

Teach Us to Pray, session 5: In Due Season

Study text: 1 Kings 17:8-16; Luke 1:46-55

Teach Us to Pray, session 6: Freedom and Forgiveness

Study text: Genesis 50:15-21

Reader Call Deadline: September 10, 2001

Valentine's Day: Is it simply a reason to buy fluffy cards and candy hearts? How do you make it meaningful?

March 2002

GRIEF, STRESS, TRANSITIONS

Just as the seasons bring change to nature, we also experience transitions in our lives. Our writers share experiences that examine good times as well as times of trial.

Bible Study

Teach Us to Pray, session 7: The Unseen Hope

Study text: Exodus 2, 15; Numbers 12

Reader Call Deadline: November 10, 2001

Women mentor all the time. Share a powerful lesson you learned from an important woman in your life.

April 2002

GETTING AND STAYING CONNECTED

How do we answer the challenge to get and stay connected to God and one another in this hustle-bustle world?

IdeaNet

July/August 2001 • Vol. 7, Number 10

For Mission Together

Celebrate! Happy Solutions

For many years, Park Ridge, Illinois, has celebrated the Fourth of July at Maine East High School football stadium, directly across from Messiah Lutheran Church. Our church lawn and parking lot were ideal for watching the fireworks. Sound great? Think again.

It wasn't that we objected to visitors using our property, it was the few "rotten apples that spoiled the bushel!" There were people smoking pot, drinking beer, and engaging in all-around rowdy behavior. The property was a mess the next morning—cigarette butts, beer cans, liquor bottles, and food containers littered the area. Cars were even driven over the grass.

Needless to say, our minister, who lived next door to the church, was very upset. The church council talked it over and came up with a solution: Let's have our own Fourth of July celebration in conjunction with the celebration across the street. We have a Messiah Lutheran Family Ice Cream Social that includes the families of the Messiah Child Care Center, members of the

congregation, and any friends or "soon to be friends" that come by. Then we gather on the lawn to watch the fireworks across the street.

This celebration began at least 15 years ago. We are still having a great time and attendance grows each year. It was a happy solution to a big problem!

*Millie Anderson, member
Messiah Lutheran Church
Park Ridge, Illinois*

God in the Workplace

For several years, our church had a "God in the Workplace" theme for Labor Day weekend. Several members would come forward at various points during the service to talk about their jobs and how their faith affects their work. We asked each person to dress as they would for a workday.

It was a powerful way to show that our faith lives and doesn't end as we walk out the front door of the church.

*Amy Kragnes
Lord of Love Lutheran Church
Omaha, Nebraska*

The Celebrations Continue; The Locations Change

In the 1970s, the women of Delafield Evangelical Lutheran Church, a rural congregation near Windom, Minnesota, began celebrating Ascension Day with a brunch and special speaker for the program. Friends and neighbors were also invited so the basement was always full! Delafield has since closed, but since many members transferred to Windom American Lutheran Church, the tradition of Ascension Day brunch continues there.

A "Journey to Bethlehem" was started in the 1970s on a Sunday evening in Advent also at Delafield. Members were invited to come to the church and spend personal worship time in the sanctuary, leave an offering in the manger for Lutheran Social Services, and then proceed to the basement for fellowship over coffee and goodies around candlelit tables. Since the Delafield church closed, the tradition of a "Journey to Bethlehem" continues at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Lakefield,

Minnesota, where some members have transferred.

Rosalie Brodin,
Windom, Minnesota

Mardi Gras: Lutheran-Texas Style

Our Savior Lutheran (a Mesquite, Texas, congregation) celebrates Mardi Gras the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. We do the limbo, race with crawdads, stoke up the ashes for Ash Wednesday, and march in a Mardi Gras parade, the envy of New Orleans! The best pancakes this side of Sweden are served up by the Women of the ELCA in the Family Life Center. Y'all come now, hear!

Clarie Streng
Garland, Texas

That is all the Celebrate! sharing we received! Either we as Lutherans do not celebrate (other than Christmas and Easter) or we don't know we are celebrating!

We will try this again so write down the next time you celebrate in your congregation or women's group and share!—Faith

IdeaNet

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Potpourri Sharing

WANTED: Is there a resource book of fund-raising activities available for purchase or free? Or have you written on this subject in previous months? —Kristy O.

We have not written on this subject nor do I know of a fund-raising resource book to suggest. Do any of you readers have suggestions? Please contact Faith at: IdeaNet@elca.org or at the address on the next page.

WANTED: Please print a crochet pattern for a layette-sized sweater for Lutheran World Relief. There must be one out there somewhere. Also, Global Health ministries needs knitted or crocheted small baby caps and we have no patterns. Help! —Linda S.

Our staff is of no help on this; I think we are knit and crochet deficit! If anyone can help, please mail the pattern to me and it will be forwarded to Linda.

WANTED: A program, skit, or study resource on Women of the Bible for a Mother/Daughter banquet. It would be helpful if you have actually used it and can give helpful critiques and suggestions. —Beth S.

When Beth said, "It would be helpful if you have actually used it," I decided to ask you all for help. Please email or mail any suggestions you have successfully used.

Coming up in IdeaNet

October 2001

Children in Church

Children can give amazing insight into what is happening during a church service, and at other times when we gather as a congregation—if we listen and take them seriously!

Share when you experienced new insight from a child about church. Share church bulletin inserts that encourage children to come to the service. Share the funny moments that come from a child's observation of the service.

Widen the Circle

Instead of requesting supplies for school kit bags this year, our ladies made 55 bags, put a list of supplies needed inside each bag, placed the bags in a variety of areas around the church, and asked ladies of the congregation to pick them up and bring them back filled. This way we have at least 55 filled school-bags for Lutheran World Relief without having extras of some things and not enough of other things.

The ladies enjoyed picking up the bags and most have already

WE WANT YOUR

PostCard Ideas

come back filled even though we still have a month to go. We might even have to make more bags to be filled!

We have only a few active ladies in our Women of the ELCA group, and this way we involve additional members of the congregation.

Catherine Mincemoyer

*St. Paul Lutheran Church of
Bulverde, Texas*

A Lovely Way to Say Thanks!

Last Saturday our family had a wonderful experience at Epiphany Lutheran Church in Burtonsville, Maryland. I have chosen to say, "Thank you!" to them by sending this gift to Katie's Fund.

Our daughter, Jill, is expecting her first child in the next few weeks, and her sister wanted to have a shower for her. In our search for a location to hold the shower we decided to call the church that Jill and her husband had joined in the fall. What a nice surprise to find that they, too, were planning a shower for Jill. We decided to share. They provided the place, the cake, some of the decorations, plus set-up and clean-up. One of the new mothers in the

congregation brought all of her decorative bags from her baby shower to the church to be reused. Our guests included women from Jill's former church in Annandale, Virginia, several from Epiphany, her associates from work, and family members. We had such a good time.

I have been deeply involved in the work of Women of the ELCA since my children were very young, thanks to the invitation of one woman. She and those who made me a district chair knew very little about me, but they encouraged and supported me.

Now I have seen both my daughters elected to church councils, participate in planning, and become dedicated to serving others in many ways. Unfortunately neither of their congregations has a Women of the ELCA Organization.

Jill requested that this gift of appreciation and thanks be made known to her congregation with information about Katie's Fund. Thanks so very much.

Joyce M. Saeger

Lancaster, Pennsylvania

**Send all
PostCard
Ideas
to**

**Women of the ELCA IdeaNet
8765 W. Higgins Rd.
Chicago, IL 60631-4189
Email: IdeaNet@elca.org**

Has evangelism fallen to the wayside? What tools have the scriptures given us to address these changing times?

Bible Study

Teach Us to Pray, session 8: The Ultimate Protection

Study Text: 1 Kings 21:1–24; Matthew 5:21–28;

Revelation 21:1–7

Reader Call Deadline: December 10, 2001

Share ideas on reaching out to someone who seems alone or lonely.

May 2002 THE POWER OF “WOMEN’S WORK”

Have we been shortchanging ourselves by watering down the importance of the work we do? A look at what comprises “women’s work” and the impact it has on others.

Bible Study

Teach Us to Pray, session 9: Power and Glory

Study text: Luke 1:46–55; Isaiah 6

Reader Call Deadline: January 10, 2002

Do you see yourself as a leader? Why or why not?

June 2002 LIFE’S STAGES, SPIRITUALITY

Do we rush through life’s stages, always anticipating what’s coming next, or do we embrace life’s stages? What rites of passage do we celebrate?

Bible study

Ephesians, Part 1

Reader Call Deadline: February 10, 2002

Share a momentous transition of your own or of someone you care about. How was your response to that transition shaped by your faith?

July/August 2002 LISTEN, GOD IS CALLING

How do we hear God calling? Do we take the time to really understand how it will express itself in our everyday lives? Explore one of the most challenging and rewarding aspects of living our faith.

Bible Study

Ephesians, Parts 2 & 3

Reader Call Deadline: March 10, 2002

How do you discern God’s call?

REGULAR FEATURES

Women of the ELCA Bible Study

Give Us This Day

Marj Leegard's wit and wisdom on everyday life.

Mothering Seasons

Reflections on parenting and spirituality.

Bookmarks

Direction for your own reading and help for book groups.

Between You and Me

Thoughts from the Executive Director or President of Women of the ELCA.

Amen!

Timely, prayerful reflections.

In the Season

Articles connecting to the liturgical season.

IdeaNet

Reader ideas related to programs, resources, and events of the women's organization.

ABOUT READER CALLS

LWT invites you to submit a "Reader Call" for this column in which you tell us and the *LWT* readership your thoughts or experiences on the topic listed. Send a short essay of about 300 words by the due date to *Lutheran Woman Today* Reader Call, 8765 W. Higgins Rd., Chicago, IL 60631. You can also email it to lwt@elca.org. At the top of your piece, note the issue and topic, along with your name, address and phone number.

By submitting a "Reader Call," you give *LWT* permission to edit and use

all or part of your essay and to allow others to reproduce the column in which it appears. All other rights to the essay remain yours. As a "thank you," we will give each essayist published in *LWT* a one-year subscription, for yourself or to give as a gift.

ABOUT THE 9-MONTH BIBLE STUDY

Teach Us to Pray: A Study of the Lord's Prayer will appear in *Lutheran Woman Today* in nine sessions, in the September 2001 through May 2002 issues. Author James A. Nestingen will guide us through each of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. Each session will explore the meaning of one of the petitions using passages from the Bible, Martin Luther's writings, and Nestingen's own rich insights gained from years of experience as a pastor and theologian to help us delve deeper into the meaning of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus' gift to us.

COMPANION RESOURCES FOR THE 9-MONTH BIBLE STUDY

If you will lead Bible study sessions or want to delve deeper into the study, you may want to consider the following resources:

Companion Bible (which also includes the portions of Luther's Small Catechism used for the study)

Resource Book

Leader Guide and Resource Book (in one volume)

Bookmarks

To order these companion resources, call Augsburg Fortress at 800-328-4648. ■

Sisters and brothers in faith

**Miriam, Moses and Aaron
Mary, Martha and Lazarus**

Susan Tjornehoj

Bible Study

SESSION 2

Whether we are “only children” or one of 10, God has placed us in community, in family. In this session we meet some more of our brothers and sisters in faith. We will see how God sustains these sometimes courageous, frequently conflicted, households. You may have met some of your family before, or this may be the first meeting. Feel free to take some notes as you go through the session and write down any reflections or questions that come to mind.

BIBLICAL BASIS

Exodus 1:22—2:10, 4:10–17, 15:20–21

Numbers 12

John 11:1–45

MEMORY VERSE

“Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron’s sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. And Miriam sang to them: ‘Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.’”
(Exodus 15:20–21)

OPENING

“Almighty God, you set the solitary in families. We commend to your care all the homes where your people live. Keep them free from bitterness and jealousy. Fill them with faith and love, joy and patience. Let children and parents, sisters and brothers, have full respect for one another. Light the fire of kindness among us all that we may show affection for one another through Jesus Christ. Amen.”
(adapted from *Lutheran Book of Worship*, p. 51, “Families”)

A SISTER AND A BABY BROTHER

Read Exodus 1:22—2:10.

1. What parts of this story are surprising to you?
2. Where do you see God at work in this story?

A TALE OF TWO BROTHERS AND A SISTER

Read Exodus 4:10–17, 15:20–21.

3. From the texts you just read, describe Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.
4. Reflect on your own household, including your children if you are a parent, or your own sisters and brothers, if you have any. What are the similarities between your family and Moses' ? What are the differences?
5. How do you see God acting through each of them? What are their strengths? Their limitations?

A COMPLAINT

Read Numbers 12.

6. What is going on in this story? What is the conflict about?
7. Choose one of the characters in the story. Describe a time in your life when you have felt like Miriam or Moses, the Cushite woman, or Aaron.
8. What role does God play in the story? Jot down some images that come to mind.
9. What is the good news in this story?
10. Each of the characters in this story has particular strengths. Name some. What gifts and strengths has God given you?

TWO SISTERS, A BROTHER AND JESUS

Moving to the New Testament now, read John 11:1–45.

11. Describe this family.
12. What in this story surprised you?
13. Describe Jesus from this story.
14. How do you see God at work in the story? In the two sisters? The brother? The community?
15. What is the good news in this story?

Bible Study

SESSION 2

Now let's reflect on the two households: Moses, Miriam, and Aaron; and Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

- What are their similarities?
- What are their differences?
- In which do you most see yourself? Your household? Your household of faith?

CONNECTION TO COMMUNITY

Like the household of Mary and Martha and Lazarus, our congregation can become a wayside rest for Jesus and his disciples. Like the young and old who worked together to resist the evil power of Pharaoh in the first story from Exodus, we can work together more closely to resist the evils that plague communities and individuals today.

We meet women and men in these stories who exhibit great courage, faith, and risk. Each sister and each brother had individual strengths. How can we identify and then cooperatively use the strengths we have?

Like Miriam, women around the world are sometimes "cast out" or marginalized. Through the assistance of Lutheran World Relief and the ELCA World Hunger Appeal (as well as many other organizations) women are forming strong economic cooperatives, strengthening their capacity to be leaders in their communities. Contact these organizations and find out how you can work together with your "sisters and brothers" in their endeavors. ■

Sisters and brothers in faith

Leader Guide

Miriam, Moses and Aaron
Mary, Martha and Lazarus

OPENING

Welcome everyone to the study. Read the memory verse together and then pray the prayer.

PREPARATION

Read through the texts first. If you have an hour to study, be sure to have a sense of the time. Allow 25 minutes for each of the stories, or choose which questions you want to

Bible Study

SESSION 2

Bible Study

LEADER GUIDE SESSION 2

focus on to fit your particular schedule. Take notes that include your own reflections, questions, discomforts, or surprises. Think of your own children or sisters and brothers, if you have them. Always remember that God is present in these stories—but how? And where is the good news?

A SISTER AND A BABY BROTHER

Exodus 1:22—2:10

If you're doing this study as a group, have someone read this story aloud. Quickly have participants retell this story which most know well.

1. There will be many responses to this question. Let your own reflections guide this one. Some may concentrate on Pharaoh or the nameless women or the courageous young women. Move right on to question 2.
2. What does this story tell us about God? That God works good out of tyrants like Pharaoh? That God uses young girls to do courageous things? There are many possible responses here. Imagine how God is at work through those gathered for study.

A TALE OF TWO BROTHERS AND A SISTER

Exodus 4:10–17, 15:20–21

3. Remind participants that they first met Moses and Miriam (though nameless) in the last story.
4. Invite the participants to share some of the similarities and differences they have with this household of sister/brother leaders. Again, as leader, it will be helpful to have some of your own examples.
5. God chooses to participate in the lives of ordinary people like us. How do we come to know God through the members of our household? For example, in the midst of conflict among siblings, perhaps either Mom or Dad functioned as mediator and peacemaker.

A COMPLAINT

Numbers 12

6. Be clear about what is going on in the story. Some scholars believe that there is racism evident in the story. Cushites are from what is now Ethiopia and were at best considered outsiders. Nonetheless, Moses chose to marry a Cushite woman. This may

Bible Study

LEADER GUIDE SESSION 2

be a strong connection for some in the group who have experienced the sting of racism or have been the family “outsider.”

7. As leader, take some time to jot down a couple times in your life when, like Aaron, your actions went unpunished, or you have felt like the Cushite woman, for example.
8. Some of the images of God may be unflattering. Yes, God does seem to play favorites sometimes! Contrast this image of God with the image in the story from Exodus 1 and 2.
- 9–10. Take some time to reflect on each of these questions with the group.

TWO SISTERS, A BROTHER AND JESUS

John 11:1–45

- 11–12. Take some time to really look at this family. The descriptions may also lead directly to question 12. We don’t meet many families quite like this. They seem to be very loving and hospitable. They are living together as adults with no children. Let the group freely describe them in their own terms.
13. Go back to any notes you may have made on this. The images of Jesus are many! We meet Jesus as friend, as healer, the one who brings life from death and so on. Keep the responses coming from your group.
- 14–15. God desires life and healing, which we see in Lazarus. The presence of God in Mary and Martha is evident in the love they have for their brother. We see God’s boldness in Martha’s irritation and witness. In Mary, God is pleading and humble. God is using this family and this situation to witness to the power of God to bring life from death.

REFLECTION

Have some fun with these last reflections. Use them as a way to close this session, focusing most on the similarities between them.

CONNECTION TO COMMUNITY

Are there particular areas in which your group participates in the life-giving, healing work of Jesus in the second story? Take a look at the ideas included in the study. ■

Bible Study

LEADER GUIDE SESSION 2



Opening Up the Family Album

Raising children

**Jairus and his daughter
Mary, Joseph and Jesus**

by Susan Tjornehoj

Bible Study

SESSION 3

We all raise children. Whether we raise them in our home or teach them in Sunday school, whether we share a pew with them at church or observe them on the street, we raise children. It takes a village to raise a child, as the proverb goes, and sometimes even a village isn't enough!

In this session we plead for healing with a dad for a dying daughter. We flee to Egypt with a refugee family and stand with Mary as she faces the death of her son. We meet "only children," precocious children, and demanding children.

Being part of the body of Christ, the household of God, means that we all share in the grief and joy of this community. God has not revealed a model of what "family" should be. In this family album, some of the pages are ripped, some of the stories are incomplete, but all of it reflects the sustaining presence of a gracious and active God we know in Jesus Christ, God with us.

This is ultimately God's family reunion. God brings the treats, sets the picnic table, and sends out the invitations—all are invited. Let's begin with Jairus, at Jesus' feet, pleading with Jesus to come to his house. It's a picture not included in many family albums.

BIBLICAL BASIS

**Luke 8:40–56, Matthew 1:18–25, 2:13–15, 19–23,
John 2:1–11, 19:25–27**

MEMORY VERSE

"Jesus' mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you'" (John 2:5).

OPENING LITANY

Gracious One, you sent your own son into this world as the child of Mary and Joseph. We thank you for the life of all

children entrusted to our care. Help us remember that we are all your children.

Loving God, listen to your children. Almighty God, you have blessed us with the joy and care of children. As we bring them up, give us calm strength and patient wisdom, that we may teach them to love whatever is just and good, following the example of Jesus, child of God, child of Mary and Joseph.

Loving God, listen to your children. God of youth, you see your children growing up in an uncertain and confusing world. Show them that your ways give life. Help them to see failure as an opportunity for a new start. Give all young people strength to keep their faith in you and to keep alive their joy in your creation, through Jesus Christ. Loving God, listen to your children. Amen.

(*Lutheran Book of Worship*, p. 51, adapted, "Birth of a child," "The care of children," "Young persons")

A FATHER AND DAUGHTER (AND THERE'S THAT OTHER WOMAN, TOO!)

Read Luke 8:40–56. Remember to take a few notes while you are reading.

1. Describe Jairus as a parent. Describe Jairus as a leader in the community.
2. What do you find surprising in the story?
3. What role does the suffering woman play?
4. Put yourself in the place of Jairus. What is your reaction to the crowds? To the suffering woman?
5. What is the good news? What do we learn about God in Jesus Christ in these stories?
6. Discuss the role of interruptions in a story. How might interruptions be vehicles of God's grace?

Choose just one of the following stories to read (or more, depending on how much time you have), and then respond to the questions.

JESUS AND HIS PARENTS

Read Matthew 1:18–25, 2:13–15, 19–23.

1. Describe Jesus' parents.
2. For the sake of their children, parents often take risks. This happens in times of war or disparity, and in the case of illness. Share an experience of when

Bible Study

SESSION 3

you or someone you know took risks for the sake of their children.

3. What do you think God is up to in this story?
4. What is the good news?

FROM A WEDDING TO A CROSS: JESUS AND HIS MOTHER

Read John 2:1–11, 19:25–27.

Bible Study

1. Describe Mary in John 2:1–11, and then in John 19:25–27.
2. Describe Jesus in John 2:1–11, and then in John 19:25–27.
3. “Woman, here is your son.” “Here is your mother.” In baptism, God made us part of God’s household. Reflect on this. What does this mean for your family? For your congregation?

SESSION 3

CONNECTION TO COMMUNITY

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) is the national agency set up by Lutheran churches in the United States to carry out the churches’ ministry with uprooted people. LIRS programs include refugee resettlement, foster care for refugee minors, assistance for political asylum seekers, immigration training and consulting, legislative advocacy, and public education. To find out more about LIRS, contact them at 700 Light Street, Baltimore, MD 21230; 410-230-2700; email: lirs@lirs.org; website: <http://www.lirs.org>.

Support parents with children in prison. Women of the ELCA has a variety of resources available to congregations with ideas on prison ministry, from Bible studies to helping children visit their incarcerated parents. Call Women of the ELCA at 800-638-3522, ext. 2730, or visit <http://www.elca.org/wo/prison.html>.

Learn about the ELCA initiative “Safe Haven for Children.” Contact your synod office for more information, call Women of the ELCA at 800-638-3522, ext. 2730, or find detailed information on the Web at <http://www.elca.org/init/safehaven>. ■

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Leader Guide

**Jairus and his daughter
Mary, Joseph and Jesus**

OPENING

Welcome your group to the final gathering of this summer of family reunions. Read together the memory verse. Then pray the litany together, perhaps dividing up the paragraphs among volunteers.

A FATHER AND HIS DAUGHTER (AND THERE'S THAT OTHER WOMAN, TOO!)

LUKE 8:40-56

Questions 1-2. Have the group briefly recap the story. Then immediately move to Jairus as parent and Jairus as leader. As a parent, he is willing to do whatever necessary to help his child. He also has some stature in the community as a leader of the synagogue.

Question 3. There are many things that may be surprising in the story. For example, that a leader of the synagogue would come to Jesus, or that Jesus' pilgrimage to Jairus's home is interrupted. God is often right behind the surprises, so look carefully.

Question 4. If you were Jairus, would you have been impatient with the crowds impeding Jesus' progress to your home? Impatient or sympathetic with the woman so desperate for a cure that she distracted Jesus?

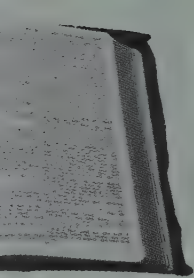
Question 5. Take some time to reflect on this. The woman merely touched Jesus' garment; when everyone thought it was too late, Jesus raised up Jairus' daughter.

Question 6. We meet God as one who responds to a father's plea, as one who moves through crowds and responds to interruptions, and one who is on a journey. Let the spirit move you as you ponder these questions.

As leader, you will need to look over each of the following choices and be ready to guide the discussion. Be aware of time. Divide your group into smaller groups based on who chose to study which story. Then give each small group the

**Bible
Study**

**LEADER
GUIDE
SESSION 3**



Bible Study

LEADER GUIDE SESSION 3

chance to share their responses, so that everyone will know the stories.

JESUS AND HIS PARENTS

Option 1

Read Matthew 1:18–25; 2:13–15, 19–23.

Questions 1–2. Let the group share their responses. Mary and Joseph are faithful, obedient, trusting of God.

Questions 3–4. God is up to a lot here; there are incredible powers at work. The child is being protected from danger; God is speaking to Mary and Joseph; prophecies are being fulfilled.

Option 2

Read John 2:1–11; 19:25–27.

Question 1. Be sure to look at both of the episodes. We get a broader picture of Mary as mother of quite a child. Is Mary nudging Jesus into his public life? She then courageously stands with him until the end.

Question 2. Again, take time to look at Jesus as child of Mary, child of God, and at Jesus as care-giver to his mother.

Question 3. This may give the opportunity for a summary of this study.

CLOSING

If the group has had the opportunity to study each of these lessons, spend some time reflecting on the biblical family and how it can shape our communities of faith and our own family. What do these stories tell us about the God we know in Jesus Christ? How does it challenge us in our congregations and communities? How is this study freeing?

CONNECTION TO COMMUNITY

Suggestions are included in the participant's portion. ■

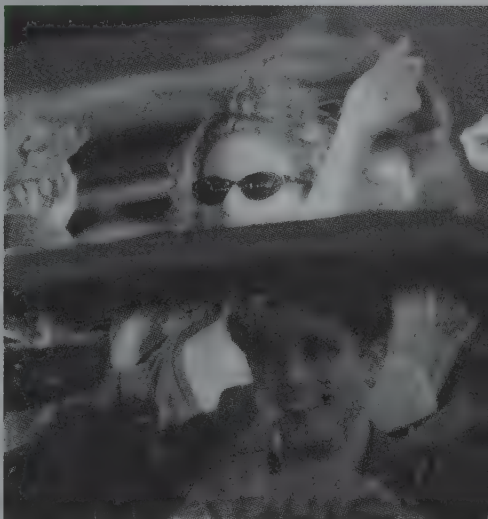
Susan Tjornehoj is an ELCA pastor, serving as an assistant to the bishop in the Saint Paul Area Synod.

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Young women's spirituality and the media

by Kathryn Jeanette Peavler

The peppy tune on the radio had your daughter and her friends bouncing and swaying all the way to the mall. You might even have been tapping your fingers on the steering wheel yourself. But did you really listen to the words of the song they were bopping to? To take it a step further, have you seen the music video that goes along with it? Chances are there will be young women, scantily clad, making suggestive moves toward the men in the music video. The lyrics, as well, are quite sexual. And your daughter—your joyous, young, pure child—is watching this?



How does this fit into the Christian lifestyle that you and your family lead? What are churches doing to counteract the negative aspects of the entertainment media? To answer these questions, we'll first look at the messages of the entertainment media and then examine the responses of the Christian church.

The term "teeny-bopper" exists for a reason. Music is a definitive part of a young girl's life and often determines, or at least shapes, who she will hang out with, how she will dress, and even how she will act. Generally speaking, a young girl who listens to recording artists like Britney Spears will not dress in all black and wear a dog-collar-type necklace. However, she will watch Britney Spears music videos, want to attend her concerts, and probably fashion herself after her in numerous ways. The lyrics and the images in the videos are often sexually suggestive. Seeing someone that a young person identifies with and wants to be like act in this way can send the message that

it is okay to imitate this behavior. But this behavior might lead them to places they might not want to be, as well as create conflict with the standards that have been set for us to follow in God's word.

Ultimately, this kind of music may negatively influence young women's spiritual lives. The response of the church—and the word of God—is that young men and women should be pure. Psalm 119:9 addresses this: "How can young people keep their way pure? By guarding it according to your word." Therefore, the message that the church places before young girls in regard to staying pure is to keep focused on the word of God and to immerse themselves in it. This one response, however, will not balance all the messages coming in from the media.

The Simpsons is an example of the role that television plays. The primary Christian characters on *The Simpsons*, Ned Flanders and Reverend Lovejoy, are portrayed respectively as highly judgmental and unable to have fun. This contributes to two untrue stereotypes of what a Christian lifestyle is like. Young people who see this popular show laugh along as the two characters are ridiculed, and they receive the message that Christians are humorless and judgmental.

Although this may be the case for some, the lifestyle that Jesus Christ left for us is not at all meant to be this way. The response of the church sings out that we are to "rejoice in the Lord always" (Philippians 4:4) and warns, "do not judge or you too will be judged" (Matthew 7:1, *New International Version*). The Christian message, and part of the response of the church, is that joy is found in obeying God's commands. Jesus assures Christians, young and old, "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete" (John 15:10–11, *NIV*).

Television also has an influence on young women's self-confidence. Again, we tend to model behavior that we see, especially when it is presented in an attractive, glossy format with carefully styled characters. *Dawson's Creek*, another popular show among young girls, offers female characters who are constantly questioning who they are in love with, and shows them falling for different male characters easily and consistently. The boyfriends give them support in their times of trouble, which crop up with remarkable frequency. The girls pore all over their

boyfriend-of-the-month, who in turn lends an ear, and the girls end up possessing very little self-confidence. These kinds of messages can lead young girls to be irresolute in their decision-making and very dependent on other, imperfect people.

When we look to the church for direction, we can easily find it. When young girls depend on God, God will consistently keep them on track. This is a biblical truth: "The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places" (Isaiah 58:11). Armed with this verse, the church is able to create an alternative message to the ideas that the secular media presents not only on television shows but through advertising, too.

Whether in the pages of a magazine, on television, on the radio or even on the Internet, we are all bombarded with advertising every day. Advertising creates desires and wants, with a sense of urgency. The girls displayed in American advertisements are stick thin, tall, and usually white. This is the idea of beauty that girls receive. It is no wonder that researchers believe that the constant presence of this distorted idea may contribute to eating disorders and depression.

The church cries out in response to this that we are all creations of God. The positive statement that needs to be shared is that young girls should take pride in and take to heart the fact that they are made in the image of God, each unique and marvelously different. The identity-shaping message is that girls are daughters of God, who wants a relationship with them. Each girl is God's own masterpiece. The church should strive to remind girls of their individuality and encourage them to embrace it with God's love. This message can be reinforced throughout the congregation.

Advertising also fosters materialistic ideals in the hearts of those who are the target audience. Often the ads that girls see in magazines show the same waif-like model looking good, surrounded by men or smiling brightly next to her group of model friends. The message is understood clearly by the young targets of millions of marketing dollars. Those who see these ads are to





think, "If I had that dress, guys would like me," or "If I cut my hair like that, my friends would think I am so cool." This desire to fit in and be accepted is a problematic recoil of materialism, and attacks young girls everywhere. It may lead them to seek out the love of boys or friends instead of the far more satisfying love of God.

The church's message is that God does not love materialism. Instead, creating the right spirit is the message: "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight" (1 Peter 3:3-4, *NIV*). Materialism becomes nothing in the eyes of young girls when their true desire is to accept and return the love that God has already given them. Advertising, though a formidable force, is overrun by the church's message of God's unfailing and accepting love.

We've explored the alternative messages of the church and the aspects of spirituality that American media taps into, and the pieces of the puzzle have been counted, checked for rips and tears, and are ready to be put together. The remaining question, though is this: How will the Christian church take action to effectively communicate their responses to the negative messages of American media?

The answer is not flashy youth-group gatherings or rowdy retreats. Actually, it is quite simple. Pray. We must teach girls how to pray for themselves and for each other. Teach your daughter how to depend on God by asking her to pray both for you and for her generation. Ask her to pray especially for guidance on how to live a Christian lifestyle in a non-Christian world. "I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better" (Ephesians 1:16-17 *NIV*). Let this be a verse to focus your prayers so that God might raise up a generation that really knows God, and lives a lifestyle suited to God's desires for us. Pray for these young girls, who are your daughters, your nieces, your granddaughters. Pray for all young girls, as they are our future. ■

Kathryn Jeanette Peavler will be part of the freshman class this fall at Eastern Illinois University. She plans to study foreign languages.

Idle and blessed

by Kate Sprutta Elliott



*I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?*

(Mary Oliver, from "The Summer Day")

This is a reflection on summer, so I invite you to pour yourself a tall glass of iced-tea or lemonade and relax for a few minutes. Do you know how to be "idle and blessed," as Mary Oliver says? Do you know how to pay attention?

Summer is a good time to be idle and blessed, and to pay attention. Every season has its gifts and wonders, to be sure, but summer has some remarkable beauties. This is a season for mindfulness. Everywhere you can see God's interest in the details.

"O taste and see that the LORD is good!" (Psalm 34:8).

There are many foods that taste best in the summer, such as sweet corn, watermelon, peaches, and cherries. When the weather is hot, you want to eat light. And these are foods that you can eat with your hands.

When my brother and I were kids, we had watermelon-seed-spitting contests in the backyard, away from the supervision of our parents. After our family had gone on vacation one summer, we returned to vines sprouting all over the grass. My mother couldn't figure out why watermelons were growing on a suburban lawn.

Let the juice drip down your chin. Isaiah writes: "Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food" (Isaiah 55:2b).

Have you ever looked at wings? Dragonfly wings, butterfly wings, blue jay wings, or hummingbird wings? What was God thinking? So many kinds of wings,

each unique. Scales and feathers of different shapes and colors. With these wings, their bearers become airborne. It is no wonder that through the ages angels were imagined to have wings. The psalmist exclaims to God, "Let me abide in your tent forever, and find refuge under the shelter of your wings" (Psalm 61:4).

The next time you have the chance to see a winged creature, look at its wings. Really look. What do you see? Iridescence? Are they sheer? Webbed? Do they look soft to the touch? Pay attention to wings—their color and detail and function—and remember God's wings sheltering you.



O SMELL AND HEAR THAT THE LORD IS GOOD!

When I think of the summers of my childhood, I recall the smells of my mother's gardens: the smell of the wet dirt of my mom's vegetable patch, and the soft sweet smell of her flowers. Have you noticed that tomato plants have their own smell? We grew dill for my grandfather's pickles. Today, dill has a strong clean smell to me, but as a kid I hated to pick it because of the furry caterpillars that lived in its fronds.

What do you smell right now? When you think of summer, what scents come to your mind? Fresh-cut grass? The way the air smells different just before a thunderstorm? The scent of ripening fruit? In Ephesians we read, "And live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering" (Ephesians 5:2). Be mindful of the smells around you. Let them summon memories of your childhood. Remember that Christ is a fragrant offering for you.

Do you remember sitting outside on a warm summer's night and hearing the crickets chirping? The sound of crickets is music to me, and I try to hold onto it in the cold winter nights. Summer has its own music, from the hissing of sprinklers to the chorus of cicadas. The sound of neighborhood kids playing on their lawns in the evenings, laughing and shrieking, reminds me that life is good and that it's good to play.

As children, my friends and I chased fireflies and grasshoppers in the field next to my grandmother's house. Standing waist-deep in Queen Anne's lace and milkweed, we tried not to get bitten by mosquitoes or scratched by burrs.

Can you hear the bees humming? Absorb the sounds around you. What are they telling you about God's rich creation and God's love for you? Do not be like those the





psalmist describes: “They have ears but do not hear; noses, but they do not smell” (Psalm 115:6).

O TOUCH AND FEEL THAT THE LORD IS GOOD

One of the gifts of summer is the freedom for skin. After months of wearing layers of clothes and bundling against the cold, finally skin gets to see the light of day and feel the warm wind. Bare arms and legs feel the soft sunlight and sweat. We’re conditioned to avoid sweating, but there’s something cathartic and healthy about it. And when does a cool shower or a walk under the sprinkler feel better than after a good sweat?

Take your shoes off and wiggle your toes in the grass for a few minutes. Job tells the Lord, “You clothed me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews” (Job 10:11). Today thank God for your skin and enjoy the gifts it gives you.

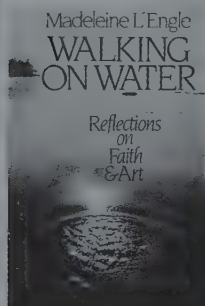
GO DEEPER

If you’d like to do some reading to help you pay attention, try the poems of Mary Oliver, the essays of Annie Dillard (*Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, *Teaching a Stone to Talk*, *Holy the Firm*), and Diane Ackerman’s *A Natural History of the Senses*. These women realize that being spiritual means being alive to the natural world around us—to really see it, to hear and taste it, to know its smells and feel it on our bodies, as well as in our heads. Our senses are a huge gift from God to us, and we don’t want to squander them by experiencing the world second-hand or half-heartedly. We don’t want to waste this “one wild and precious life,” as Mary Oliver says. Summer is a good time to play—to be idle and blessed, and to pay attention. And when you’re paying attention, remember to let God know how much you appreciate this beautiful world. ■

Kate Sprutta Elliott is editor of *Seeds for the Parish*, the resource paper of the ELCA.

Summertime reading

When I was growing up, I loved reading books in the summertime. The days stretched before me, and I had lots of books at my side. At the AAUW book sale at the start of the summer, I'd get a whole bag of books for just a few dollars. My husband tells about one boyhood summer when he read most—if not all—of the *Hardy Boys* series. My wish for you this summer is that you might have that child-like voracious appetite for some good reading. Will the two book reviews below whet your appetite?



Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art

by *Madeleine L'Engle*

Harold Shaw Publishers, 1980

Reviewed by Linda Post Bushkofsky,
Chaska, Minn.

Ever since I first read *A Wrinkle in Time*, I have enjoyed Madeleine L'Engle's work.

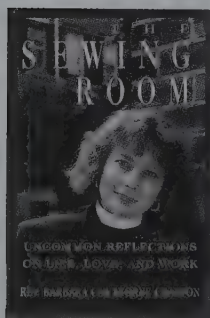
This short book about faith and art is no exception. With her usual relaxed and intimate style, L'Engle looks at much more than the title suggests. She opens up many topics for the reader—finding the sacred in the secular, observing the Sabbath, learning to respond to God's call.

L'Engle's comments about faith and art can easily be read in the fuller context of creativity. Her observations apply to all aspects of creativity, including the creativity that leads to an imaginative recipe, to a solution to a financial problem, or to the resolution of a spat between two 7-year-olds.

The book does show its age with some references to the Cold War and other events leading up to its publication in 1980. Nonetheless, it's a fitting read for women of faith exploring how one lives a responsible Christian life.

FOR REFLECTION

1. L'Engle writes that "there is nothing so secular that it cannot be sacred, and that is one of the deepest messages of the Incarnation." Describe situations where you have encountered the sacred in the secular.
2. In writing about her mother, L'Engle says that the pain she suffered deepened and strengthened her mother's life. How have painful experiences shaped your life? Have you grown because of the pain, as L'Engle claims one can?



***The Sewing Room:
Uncommon
Reflections
on Life, Love
and Work***

*by Rev. Barbara
Cawthorne
Crafton*
G. K. Hall, 1994

Reviewed by Linda Post
Bushkofsky, Chaska, Minn.

I admit it. Because I wanted a sewing room all my own, I was drawn to this book just by the title. But it was the perceptive and discerning observations drawn from daily living that kept me focused on this collection of 38 essays by Barbara Cawthorne Crafton, an Episcopal priest. As Crafton explains in her introduction, "this book is a string of people's moments: snapshots

of diverse people in many different situations who nonetheless all have said something to me about my own life."

There's the story of Ada, a homeless woman and member of Crafton's church, who struggles to find a home. "The Quick and the Dead" offers a poignant look at a gathering of The Compassionate Friends, an organization of people whose children have died. Crafton's essays run the gamut of human emotions. Because of that very diversity, there's something for everyone in this collection.

FOR REFLECTION

1. In "Trouble Love," Crafton writes about how dangerous love can be, "how wild a thing it is inside me, [and] how easily my heart can be broken." Describe a time when you have opened your heart.
2. In "I Brag to My Friend about Baking my Own Bread," Crafton illustrates the perennial struggles women have in balancing homes and jobs. What challenges have you faced in striking this balance? Or in relating to those who seek to strike a balance? ■

Linda Post Bushkofsky serves as associate synod executive for communication and interpretation for the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, PC (USA). She is a member of Edina Community Lutheran Church in Edina, Minn.

Digging for hope in Nicaragua

by Aaron Cooper

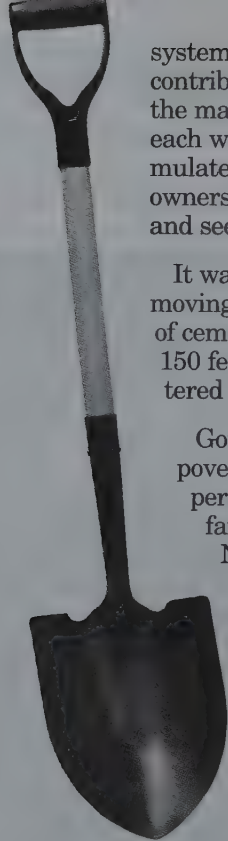
I can remember a time in the not-so-distant past when a collage of solemn images on the pages of *National Geographic* or a TV image of children in another nation standing next to Sally Struthers was all I knew of hunger and poverty in other parts of the world.

That all changed for me last fall when I traveled to Nicaragua. In this land of hunger and poverty, the one thing that impacted me most was hope. In the hills north of the capital city of Managua, I met a group of about 30 women whose lives had been devastated by the forceful floodwaters of Hurricane Mitch toward the end of 1998.

Living in a Hurricane Mitch resettlement community called *Nueva Vida* ("new life" in Spanish), these 30 women now work diligently to build what will be the home of a new organic sewing cooperative. They will be in charge of running the operation and sewing clothes in a business partnership with a U.S. clothing company, a project supported by money collected through the ELCA World Hunger Appeal and coordinated through the efforts of Lutheran World Relief. This effort is based on a simple but effective



Women working together for a better tomorrow.



system. Each member of the cooperative is required to contribute 500 hours of labor toward the construction of the main building. Once the main building is complete, each woman will have the option of investing her accumulated wages into the stock of the cooperative as part ownership, or she may be paid her accumulated wages and seek other employment.

It was inspiring to watch these women digging ditches, moving dirt, or in some cases dragging 200-pound slabs of cement to the building site over a stretch of more than 150 feet. After witnessing this, something else registered with me.

Gone were the paper-thin images of hunger and poverty in my mind. Gone were my limited, distorted perceptions of what it means to be poor in a land far from the place I call home. In all my time in Nicaragua, not once did I encounter a woman— young or old—who seemed hopeless. Instead they were hopeful, knowing well the amount of work it takes to rebuild their lives and having the determination to go the distance. Let's remember and pray for the many women in Nicaragua who have been lifted from the depths of despair and near-death to a new world where they are embracing a chance at new life.

Sometimes it takes a life-changing experience to help us get our priorities on track. But we don't need to wait for our world to be turned upside-down to begin re-examination. We can be strengthened if only we allow our risen Lord Jesus Christ to wrap his arms around us in times of despair, mourning, and tragedy.

In Jesus we find the strength to drag 200-pound slabs of concrete through the mud, to grow stronger, and to stand up and build new bonds with each other and with our gracious Creator.

Whether we are in the city streets, in the hills of Nicaragua, or within the walls of our own homes and churches, we find strength and hope in the face of our precious Savior. "I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10). ■

Aaron Cooper is writer-editor, and an administrative assistant for the ELCA World Hunger Appeal and Program.

Must we learn to accept violence?

by Joan Pope

School shootings continue to capture headlines, and disgruntled employees or former employees are wrecking havoc in the workplace, retaliating with firearms for some wrong suffered. Drive-by shootings and car-jackings are commonplace. There seems to be no way out of the tensions between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Is there nothing we can do?

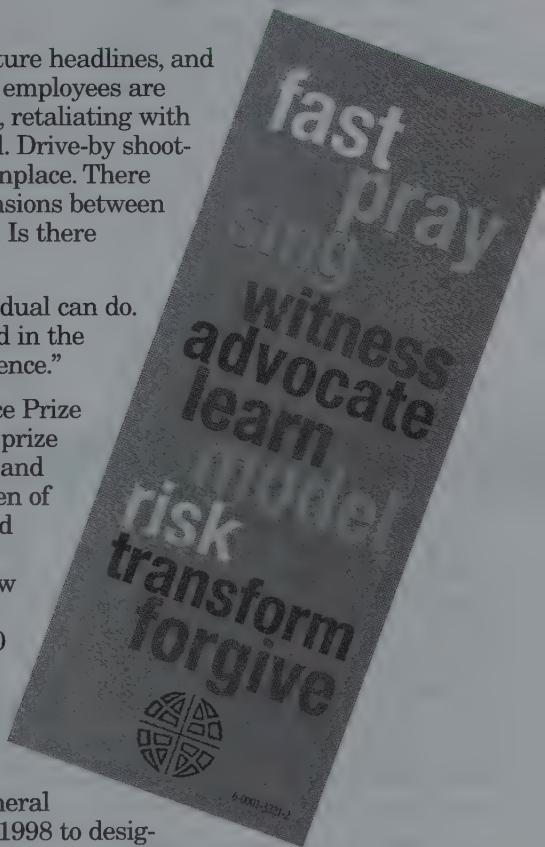
There is something each individual can do. Learn about and become involved in the "Decade for a Culture of Nonviolence."

A few years ago, 20 Nobel Peace Prize laureates (having won the peace prize between 1965 and 1996) drafted and signed a petition, "For the children of the world." It called on the United Nations General Assembly to declare the first decade of the new millennium a decade of nonviolence and to use the year 2000 for education on nonviolence.

In 1997, the General Assembly of the United Nations declared 2000 the Year for the Culture of Peace. The General Assembly voted unanimously in 1998 to designate 2001–2010 the Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World.

Many of the ELCA's 65 synods, as well as Women of the ELCA and other churchwide organizations, passed resolutions asking the church to get involved with the purpose of the decade.

The ELCA's 1999 Churchwide Assembly affirmed the church's commitment to the purposes of the decade and



directed the ELCA Division for Church in Society (DCS) to assemble a task force and coordinate the activities of the entire church in response to the laureates' challenge.

The task force was convened in 1999 and is composed of staff from eight commissions, departments, and divisions of the ELCA, as well as representatives from Women of the ELCA and the Lutheran Peace Fellowship. The task force meets regularly at the Lutheran Center in Chicago and recently reported to the ELCA Planning Team (unit executive directors).

Lutheran Peace Fellowship, with offices located in Central Lutheran Church, Seattle, offered a number of training events "From Violence to Wholeness" during 2000 and will continue to do so throughout the decade.

Participants at Global Mission Events last summer received a poster and fact sheet about the decade. A bulletin insert explaining the decade was developed and distributed throughout the ELCA. Within the Division for Higher Education and Schools, the Department for Schools developed and distributed a number of suggestions for schools and parents.

The 2001 Global Mission Events in Denver and in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, have as their theme "Live God's Peace." In addition to the always helpful workshops, speakers, and Bible studies, they will feature "Peace to the City," a World Council of Churches dance/drama produced by Brazilian theologian and artist Lusmarina Campos Garcia.

"Living Faithfully in a Violent World: Congregations and Community Working Together to End Violence" is a three-year training process sponsored by the Division for Congregational Ministries and the Division for Church in Society. The training will focus on three areas: living faithfully, reducing violence, and peace-building, as they relate to families, congregations, and communities. Events have already been held in San Antonio, Texas, and in Colorado.

The work done by the Women of the ELCA anti-racism network certainly supports the aims of the decade. Efforts by synodical organizations and units in prison ministry and domestic violence are also important contributions. The 1999 publications *Called to Prison*, with practical help for getting started in prison ministry, and *Making Children a Priority*, ideas for becoming advocates for children, are additional Women of the ELCA resources for the decade.

One form of violence is poverty. Women of the ELCA has been active since 1988 in ministry with Women and Children Living in Poverty. (Current work in this area is part of Women and Children in Crisis.)

Families can join with others making a Family Pledge of Nonviolence. Topics covered are respect for self and others, better communication, listening, forgiving, respect for nature, creative play, and courage. The Families Against Violence Advocacy Network originated the pledge.

Congregations can join the grassroots effort Every Church a Peace Church. John Stoner, a Mennonite and coordinator of New Call to Peacemaking, started this campaign.

The ELCA task force has a handy new brochure, *Decade for a Culture of Nonviolence, 2001-2010* (ISBN 6-0001-3221-2). It includes brief background on the decade, ideas for involvement, and a listing of resources. You can get one copy free by calling ELCA Resource Information Services (RIS) at 800-638-3522. For additional copies (limit 50), call Augsburg Fortress at 800-328-4648. The brochure is free, but there is a shipping and handling charge.

I lived in the Philadelphia area when 11-year-old Trevor Farrell, who lived in an affluent suburb, convinced his family to take him to the city streets so he could meet and help the homeless people he saw on TV. He began a campaign of outreach, which continued until he graduated from high school. An individual can make a difference. We do not need to accept violence as a way of life. ■

Joan Pope served on the Women of the ELCA staff for 13 years. Since her retirement in January 2001, she began her role as social ministry chair for her congregation and volunteer for other justice organizations.

RESOURCES

Telephone numbers

ELCA:
800-638-3522

- for more information about the Decade, ext. 2797
- for information about Global Mission Events, ext. 2642
- for information about "Living Faithfully in a Violent World," ext. 2804

Lutheran Peace Fellowship:
206-720-0313

Resources and information about "From Violence to Wholeness"

Every Church a Peace Church: 717-859-1958

Augsburg Fortress:
800-328-4648

Order "Called to Prison" (ISBN 6-0001-0673-4) and "Making Children a Priority" (ISBN 6-0001-0879-6). Free, plus a charge for shipping and handling.

Institute for Peace and Justice:
314-533-4445
Families Against Violence Advocacy Network

Gospel power tools

by Susan Greeley



As a reader of *Lutheran Woman Today*, you know the power of the good news of the gospel, and that's one reason we love to tell the story. We want to share the hope of the resurrection with others, and we want to tell the story because our Lord told us to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19).

Publishing this magazine is one way Women of the ELCA carries out its mission of sharing the good news and making disciples. The ELCA has other publica-

tions that also proclaim Christ's death and resurrection, including *The Lutheran*, *Seeds for the Parish*, *Voices of Congregational Life*, and *Lutheran Partners*. There are many additional ways the ELCA can help you tell the story.

If you would like to see more articles about religion in your local newspaper, ask the editor to check out the ELCA news releases on the Internet at www.elca.org/co/news. Even if the paper doesn't print the news release itself, a reporter may find a good idea for a local story. The ELCA also has broadcast stories for radio news. Local radio stations call in and record these stories to air later during

their own news segments. All your local radio station has to do is call 1-800-44-NEWS-5 (1-800-446-3975). Or you can call yourself to hear from ELCA newsmakers. These stories are updated every Thursday afternoon.

A call-in 800 number is one way that Bishop H. George Anderson communicates with members of the ELCA. "Dial Bishop Anderson" is a 3- to 4-minute recorded phone message from the Bishop that changes each month on the 1st and the 15th. You can hear the Bishop talk about current issues facing the ELCA, recent news events, and the ELCA's response to disaster situations. Just call 1-800-638-3522, ext. 2930 during regular business hours. Bishop Anderson's message is also available on the Internet at www.elca.org/dial.html.

Many of you help tell the story by supporting Lutheran Vespers, an international radio ministry that spreads the gospel more than 235 stations each week. Lutheran Vespers also has a phone number you can call to hear Walter Wangerin Jr. talk about what's coming up on the next program. You'll find this 1- to 2-minute recorded message at 1-800-638-3522, ext. 6550.

Lutheran Vespers can help you share the hope of the gospel in other ways as well. Do you have family members or friends who are experiencing significant changes in their lives? Lutheran Vespers has packaged cassette resources on topics including marriage, divorce, parenthood, adultery, abuse, grief, and prayer.

Even if Lutheran Vespers isn't carried on a radio station in your area, you still can hear Wangerin's unique way of presenting the gospel. Many people subscribe to the program, which is available on cassette, on CD, or in printed transcripts. Each month you would receive four programs in the mail to use for individual devotional study.

Looking for a good program for your circle or Bible study group? Try using a segment from *MOSAIC*, the video magazine that provides interesting stories about the ways ELCA congregations, organizations and individual members tell God's story. Each segment runs about 20 minutes and comes with a discussion guide.

Perhaps you are interested in particular ministries: global mission or hunger or advocacy programs. The ELCA has many resources designed to help you tell the story. Explore the ELCA's website at www.elca.org or call a resource information specialist at 1-800-638-3522 for more information. ■

Susan Greeley is the director/producer for Lutheran Vespers, the radio ministry of the ELCA.



Between You and Me by Catherine I. H. F.

In praise of big sisters

Just 12 months from now, Women of the ELCA will gather in Philadelphia for "Listen, God Is Calling," a week-long celebration of God's faithfulness and women's ministry (July 8–14, 2002). We will be surrounded in prayer by thousands of sisters in Christ. We also will remember the witness of women who got us to Philadelphia, those who have brought us thus far by faith. Many women have been my models of faithfulness to Christ:

- The women who welcomed me at age 8 into a neighborhood vacation Bible school at St. Paul Lutheran Church (LCMS), Mountain View, California, taught me that Jesus loved me, just the way I was.
- Annabelle Cothren, my girls' choir director at North Salinas High School, California, who included some of the great music of the church in our public school choral repertoire. When I was preparing for adult baptism a few years later, the biblical precepts and the music of the church didn't seem as strange as they might have otherwise.
- Pastor Molly Doreza, who supervised me during my student-pastor experience at Faith Lutheran Church, Walworth, Wisconsin. Her confident, good-humored, practical style of pastoring and teaching freed me to discover and develop my own gifts for ministry.
- The women at Zion Lutheran Church, Whitehall, Montana; St. Paul Lutheran Church, Ontario, Oregon; Zion Lutheran Church, Fairfield, Washington; and now, Capron Lutheran Church in Capron, Illinois, women who have taught me, nurtured me, borne with me in tough times and rejoiced with me in good times.
- Women who, like Frances Hesselbein, former chief executive of the Girl Scouts-USA, combine bedrock faith and volunteer experience to change lives on a scale only God could imagine.
- The women I have served with on churchwide staff of the ELCA and those who have volunteered on churchwide and synodical boards with whom I've worked. I don't dare start listing names! Suffice it to say that these leading women heard God's call to servant leadership and were not found wanting.
- These are women who have changed my life, for Jesus' sake. They are women who mentor other women, who are neighbor to the stranger, who gather strength, focus and boldness from the One who has changed their lives forever. They are my big sisters in Christ, and they are many. ■

Catherine I. H. Braasch is executive director, Women of the ELCA.

What is this family thing?

What is this family thing?

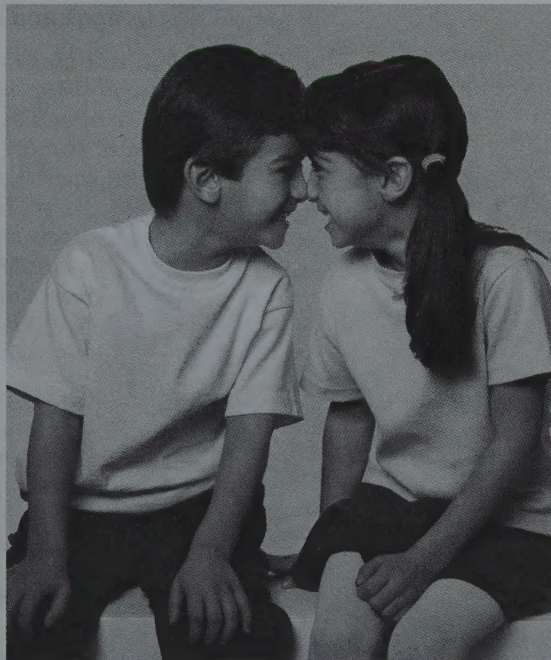
Our siblings know our stories. Perhaps, like wary adolescents, we shrink from siblings because of the secrets they carry, because of the power they have to reveal us. Perhaps, like middle-aged children at the funeral of a beloved parent, we cling to our siblings precisely because they know the stories that tell who we are.

What is this family thing?

In Genesis 4:9, Cain dared God to name his responsibility to his brother: "Am I my brother's keeper?" Jesus declared that ties of faith surpass blood ties: "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:35).

The apostle Paul took the

Roman church to task: "Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God" (Romans 14:10).



O God, what is this family thing? We have seen little children fight disagreeably with each other, and then turn with equal ferocity to defend one another when the family is threatened. What does it mean, dear God, that you call us all brothers and sisters? Some say blood is thicker than water. But you have said that baptismal water creates a bond strongest of all. If we love our families, we might sacrifice on their behalf.

How can we understand that every member of the body of Christ is a sibling? What does this mean to our sense of loyalty and honor and familial deference?

For some people whose families did more harm than good, this wider sense of who is sibling is pure gift. Some of us understand that we can create family, that we can agree to be siblings. For some of us, it is easier to break free of those biological ties, to think and love more broadly.

But God, how can we love all others as if they were brother or sister? What would our lives look like if everyone received the attention we might give to a beloved brother or sister? Think, O God, of all those in need—of their hunger, nakedness, bondage, and thirst? How can we be siblings to people we do not know except as your son or daughter? How can we love the earth as your child, too, when we have imagined it as a commodity you have delivered for our dominion?



God of peace and wisdom, only you have the vision to balance your needs with the needs of all others. Only you can see every angle, every hope, and every potential. Our vision is sorely limited, as is our ability to give and love. But we confess that you have created us to be gifts to this world. We confess that we are your children, and that in our baptism we are made sisters and brothers with all. We believe that you made us from the dirt and that we are, therefore, more related to the earth than we can ever imagine. Teach us how to live as siblings.

When we fall short, forgive us. Keep us from shame and inertia. Inspire us with your love to try again to seek your justice for all our brothers and sisters, and for the earth. Guide us to live generously, full of your grace. Amen.

Catherine Malotky serves in communications at the ELCA Board of Pensions. An ordained pastor, she has also been an editor, teacher, parish pastor, writer, and retreat leader. She and her husband have two daughters.

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**Attention
all readers:**

See page 7 for
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